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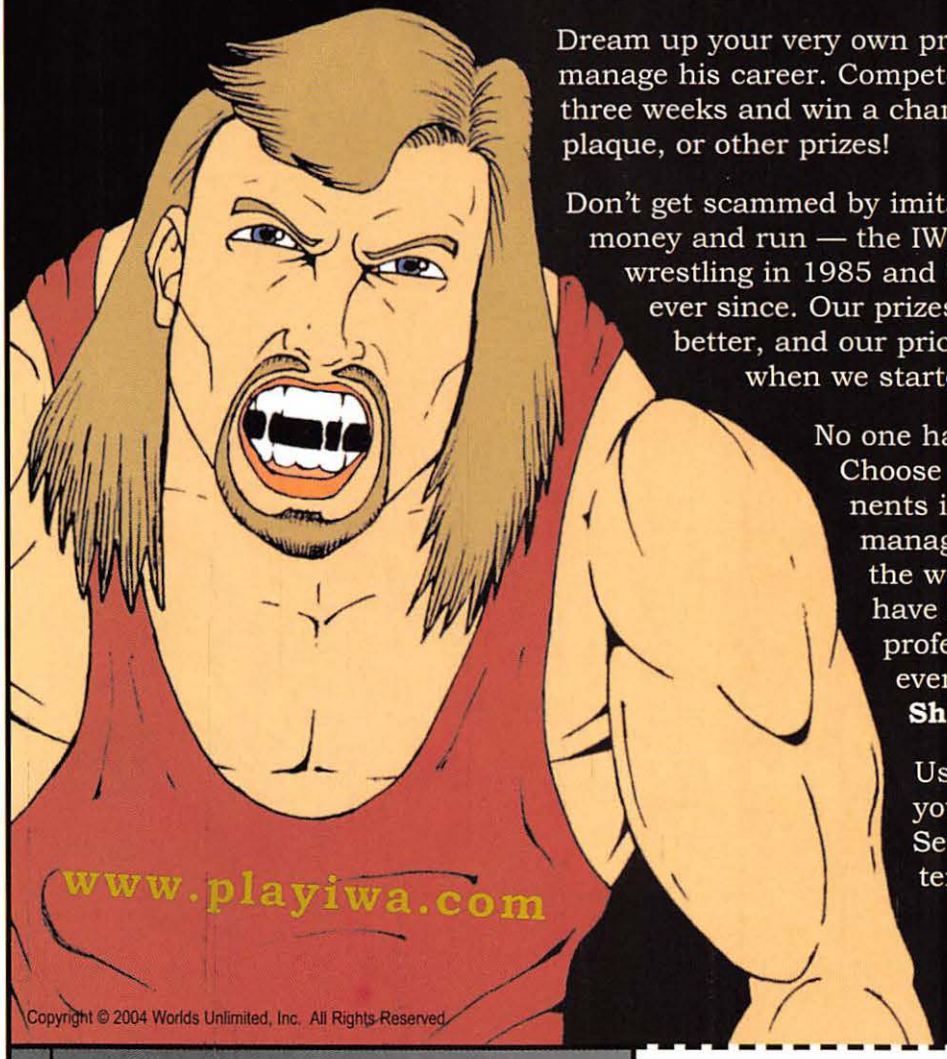

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4. Asian spike
5. Atomic drop
6. Bear hug
7. Bite
8. Body slam
9. Body tackle
10. Bulldog
11. Chicken wing
12. Choke slam
13. Claw
14. Clothesline
15. Cross body block
16. Double axehandle
17. Drop kick
18. Eagle split
19. Elbow smash
20. Eye gouge
21. Face rake
22. Fireman's carry ram
23. Flying body press
24. Flying clothesline
25. Flying drop kick
26. Flying elbow drop
27. Flying head butt
28. Flying mare
29. Forearm smash
30. Foreign object
31. Full nelson
32. Giant swing
33. Grapevine
34. Hair pull
35. Hammer lock
36. Head lock
37. Head stomp
38. Hip roll
39. Irish whip
40. Knee drop
41. Leg lock
42. Leg sweep
43. Manager interference
44. Monkey flip
45. Overhead toss
46. Pole ram
47. Reverse chin lock
48. Rolling scissors
49. Rope burn
50. Russian sickle
51. Savate kick
52. Scissors grip
53. Shoulder breaker
54. Slingshot
55. Snap mare
56. Step-over toe hold
57. Suplex
58. Surfboard
59. Turnbuckle smash
60. Wrist lock

SET-UP HOLDS

61. Abdominal stretch
62. Avalanche
63. Backbreaker
64. Backroll press
65. Belly to belly
66. Big splash
67. Boston crab
68. Brain buster
69. Camel clutch
70. Cobra clutch
71. Cradle
72. Crucifix
73. DDT
74. Figure four
75. Flying leg drop
76. Gourd buster
77. Hurricanrana
78. Moonsault
79. Neckbreaker
80. Piledriver
81. Power bomb
82. Power slam
83. Scorpion deathlock
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85. Slingshot suplex
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88. Sunset flip
89. Superplex
90. Texas cloverleaf

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6 _____ 7 _____ 8 _____ 9 _____ 10 _____

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FINISHING HOLD: *Create your own custom final maneuver or choose a hold from our list.* _____

from the desk of...

TAKE IT FROM somebody with 25-plus years of experience in the wrestling media: If any industry in America can make you feel old, it's professional wrestling. I don't mean old in a physical sense—more like spiritually and culturally out of touch.

Let's face it, in order to survive, pro wrestling must cater to the whims of its fans. The pressure to exploit new tastes and emerging trends never subsides. Wrestlers and wrestling organizations must continually reinvent themselves. For better or worse, wrestling must appear to be on the cutting edge of sports, entertainment, and society.

Twenty-five years ago, when Mil Mascaras' aerial style represented wrestling's cutting edge, I felt more connected to the sport. I was much younger, our culture was more subdued, and we didn't hear about our favorite wrestlers dying each month.

But today we do. And since most of the superstars leaving us these days are years younger than me, the news feels more like a kick in the shins than the titillating buzz of my teenage years. Worse, it seems as if grappling with that pain in the shins has become a regular part of my job.

Perhaps the saddest part of wrestling's recent death epidemic is the sheer wastefulness of it all. While some wrestlers succumb to the very real dangers of the sport, far too many of them fall victim to substance abuse and self-flagellant lifestyles. Finding the silver lining in these catastrophes is never easy, no matter how hard I look.

But I didn't have to look hard when I heard about Chris Candido. Chris died at his home in New Jersey on April 28, just three days after undergoing surgery to repair a broken ankle he suffered in the opening match of TNA's Lockdown pay-per-view on April 24 in Orlando. A blood clot had formed in the area of the surgery and then lodged in his lungs and heart, according to the initial reports.

Like many of you, I was shocked and saddened to hear the news. But I wasn't frustrated, and I know why. It's because Chris Candido's death was far from wasteful in that there's so much to be learned from his life.

It's no secret that aside from his battles in the ring, Chris Candido battled personal demons for many years, namely drug addiction. But unlike the many before him who lost their careers and lives to substance abuse, Chris fought back. He fought back hard.

He made the changes he needed to make in order to work his way back into the spotlight in the profession he so often looked to be born to join. Chris' role in TNA was small, and he wasn't cashing any six-figure checks. But he was happy, grateful, and proud to be clean, sober, and doing what he loved most—wrestling. Had he not died, chances are good that he would have been given a chance to take on a more significant role with the promotion in the months to come.

Sadly, Chris Candido will never get the opportunity to make a full return to the top of the sport. Even at a young 33 years of age, Chris faced an uphill battle in that regard. He was an immensely talented and naturally gifted performer. But reinventing himself in a fledgling organization such as TNA would have been a challenge.

Then again, if Chris' life taught us anything, it was that he was willing to take on a challenge, no matter how daunting it seemed to be.

Maybe being witness to all the senseless deaths has taught me to recognize the inspirational message in Chris Candido's life. Maybe this is what they mean by being older and wiser. Still, I don't know if I'll ever get comfortable sharing space with so much tragedy on wrestling's cutting edge.

Stu Saks
Publisher

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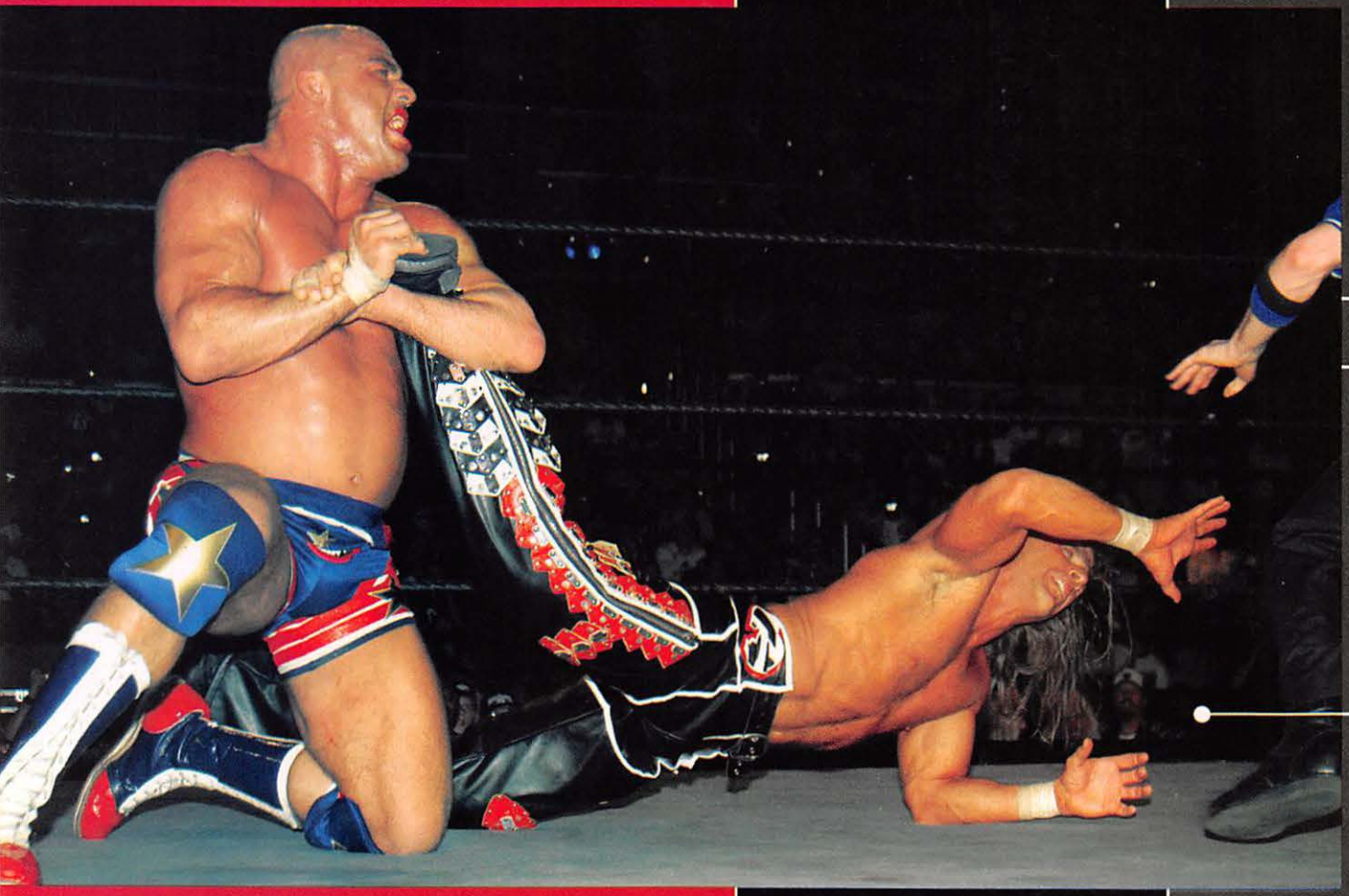

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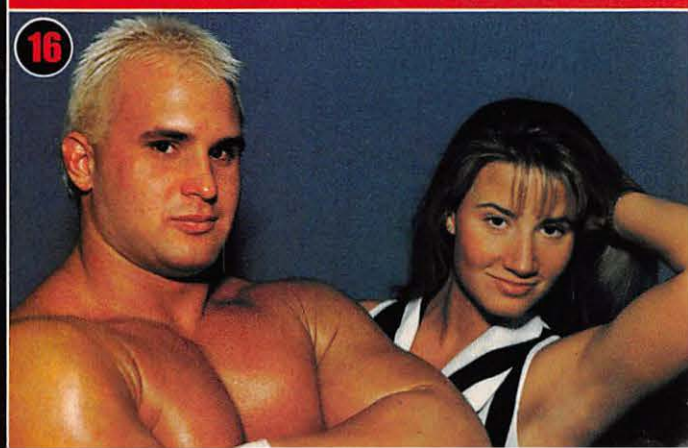

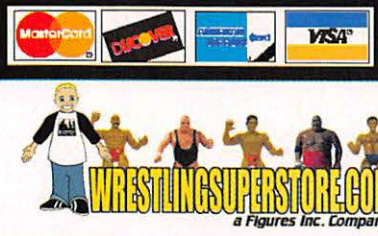

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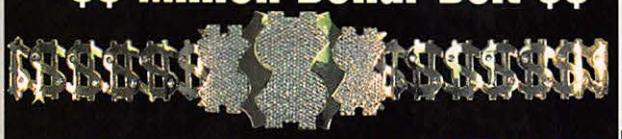

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Kane (studio shot) (WWEP006)
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Steve Austin (pointing) (WWEP026)
Sable (in bikini) (WWEP027)
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Big Show (doing chokeslam) (WWEP0063)
John Cena (holding U.S. belt) (WWEP091)
Undertaker (*WrestleMania XX*) (WWEP093)
Stacy Keibler (Bra & Panties Match) (WWEP096)
John Cena (studio) (WWEP097)
Rikishi & Scotty 2 Hotty (WWEP094)
Miss Jackie (cheerleader) (WWEP095)
Kurt Angle (studio) (WWEP090)
Eddie Guerrero (holding belt) (WWEP092)
Rob Van Dam (studio) (WWEP087)
Goldberg (pressing Randy Orton) (WWE036)
John Cena (slamming Undertaker) (WWE037)
Brock Lesnar (giving Kurt Angle F-5) (WWEP038)
Goldberg (attacking Randy Orton) (WWEP039)
Scott Steiner (studio shot) (WWEP040)
Trish Stratus (studio shot) (WWE041)
Triple H (Pedigreeing The Hurricane) (WWEP042)
Kane (slamming Shane McMahon) (WWEP043)
Eugene (studio shot) (WWEP105)

Rey Mysterio Replica Masks

Series 1
Black (WWEREPLICA-MASK03)
Silver (WWEREPLICA-MASK04)
Red (WWEREPLICA-

Series 2
Gold MASK09) (WWEREPLICA-
Camoflauge (WWEREPLICA-

Jakks Action Figures

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Eugene RA11 (WWEJ00140)
Batista RA11 (WWEJ00138)
Rey Mysterio RA12 (WWEJ00148)
Triple H™ (WWEJEX006)
Spike Dudley™ (WWEJEX004)
Tazz™ (WWEJEX005)
Paul Heyman™ (WWEJEX010)

Victoria™ (WWEJEX014)

Far East Box Set (WWEJEX011) $15.00 set.

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Real Scale Ring (WWEJEX5200) $65.00 each

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Cruiserweight Championship Belt (WWEBELT02)
The Rock's Brahma Bull Belt (WWEBELT07)
European Championship Belt (WWEBELT11)
Intercontinental Championship Belt (WWEBELT09)
Tag Team Championship Belt (WWEBELT10)
Light-Heavyweight Championship Belt (WWEBELT12)
Raw Heavyweight Championship Belt (WWEBELT20)
Stone Cold Smokin' Skull Belt (WWEBELT05)
United States Championship Belt (WWEBELT21)
SmackDown!™ Tag Team Championship Belt (WWEBELT22)
Classic Winged Eagle Championship Belt (WWEJAKKSBELT23)
Classic Intercontinental Championship Belt (WWEJAKKSBELT24)

Pendants, Dog Tags, and Key Chains

Key Chains

Undisputed Championship Belt key chain (WWEKC008)
Triple H logo key chain (WWEKC014)
Trish Stratus logo key chain (WWEKC011)
Shawn Michaels HBK key chain (WWEKC013)
Matt Hardy V1 key chain (WWEKC015)
Goldust face key chain (WWEKC0170
Goldberg logo key chain (WWEKC018)
Raw World Championship belt key chain (WWEKC019)
Steve Austin 3:16 skull key chain (WWEKC020)
Rey Mysterio mask key chain (WWEKC021)
Undertaker devil face key chain (WWEKC022)
Brock tattoo logo key chain (WWEKC023)
Triple H logo key chain (WWEKC024)
Y2J (Ass Clown) key chain (WWEKC012)
Stacy Keibler logo key chain (WWEKC010)

Pendants

Y2J (Ass Clown) pendant (WWEPENDANT007)
Kane mask pendant (WWEPENDANT011)
Stacy Keibler pendant (WWEPENDANT005)
Steve Austin (What?) pendant (WWEPENDANT009)
Trish Stratus logo pendant (WWEPENDANT006)
Undertaker devil head pendant (WWEPENDANT010)
Triple H logo pendant (WWEPENDANT013)
Shawn Michaels HBK pendant (WWEPENDANT008)
Matt Hardy V1 pendant (WWEPENDANT012)
Goldberg pendant (WWEPENDANT016)
Rey Mysterio 619 logo pendant (WWEPENDANT017)
Steve Austin 3:16 skull pendant (WWEPENDANT018)
Rey Mysterio mask pendant (WWEPENDANT019)
Brock Lesnar tattoo logo pendant (WWEPENDANT020)
Triple H logo pendant (WWEPENDANT022)
Undertaker devil face 2 pendant (WWEPENDANT021)
John Cena (Word Life) (WWEPENDANT025)

Pendants	$15.00 each
Key Chains	$8.00 each

VHS Videos and DVDs by

TITLE	DVD		VHS	
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Trish Stratus	(WWEDVD33)	$25.00	(WWEVIDEO33)	$15.00
The Monday Night War	(WWEDVD45)	$25.00	(WWEVIDEO45)	$15.00
The Stone Cold Truth	(WWEDVD44)	$25.00	(WWEVIDEO44)	$15.00
Armageddon 2003	(WWEDVD40)	$25.00	(WWEVIDEO40)	$20.00
Survivor Series 2003	(WWEDVD39)	$25.00	(WWEVIDEO39)	$20.00
Cause Stone Cold Said So	(WWEDVD42)	$10.00	----------	
Undertaker: He Buries Them Alive	(WWEDVD43)	$10.00	----------	
Mick Foley: Greatest Hits & Misses	(WWEDVD41)	$30.00	----------	
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Royal Rumble 2004	(WWEDVD46)	$25.00	(WWEVIDEO46)	$15.00
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Raw 10th Anniversary	(WWEDVD20)	$25.00	(WWEVIDEO20)	$15.00
Divas: Desert Heat	(WWEDVD21)	$25.00	(WWEVIDEO21)	$15.00
No Way Out 2003	(WWEDVD22)	$25.00	(WWEVIDEO22)	$20.00
Unforgiven 2003	(WWEDVD36)	$25.00	(WWEVIDEO36)	$20.00
No Mercy 2003	(WWEDVD38)	$25.00	(WWEVIDEO38)	$20.00
Rey Mysterio	(WWEDVD24)	$25.00	(WWEVIDEO24)	$15.00
WrestleMania XIX	(WWEDVD23)	$30.00	(WWEVIDEO23)	$20.00
WrestleMania XX	(WWEDVD50)	$35.00	(WWEVIDEO50)	$20.00
Divas : South of the Border	(WWEDVD49)	$25.00	(WWEVIDEO49)	$15.00
No Way Out 2004	(WWEDVD48)	$25.00	(WWEVIDEO48)	$20.00
Backlash 2004	(WWEDVD51)	$25.00	(WWEVIDEO51)	$20.00
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Judgment Day 2004	(WWEDVD52)	$25.00	(WWEVIDEO52)	$20.00
Bad Blood 2004	(WWEDVD55)	$25.00	(WWEVIDEO55)	$20.00
The Great American Bash 2004	(WWEDVD57)	$25.00	(WWEVIDEO57)	$20.00
Vengeance 2004	(WWEDVD58)	$25.00	(WWEVIDEO58)	$20.00
Chris Benoit: Hard Knocks	(WWEDVD56)	$30.00	(WWEVIDEO56)	$15.00
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Andre the Giant	(WWEDVD70)	$10.00	----------	
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No Way Out 2005	(WWEDVD75)	$25.00	----------	

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before the bell

Compiled by Will Welsh

Raven Calling ...

Have you ever been up at 2 a.m., unable to sleep, sitting in front of some lousy infomercial for some even lousier machine that will supposedly give you firmer abs, when suddenly you wonder when-oh-when is my favorite "D" list celebrity ever going to call me? Of course you have. Who hasn't? After all, what could possibly be more fulfilling than picking up the phone and hearing the barely recognizable tone of a celebrity, one that's been long forgotten by the rest of society, wishing you well?

Not too darn much if you ask us. As the rest of the world knows, the ability to buy the time of your favorite fallen celebrity is now part of the American dream.

Well, now it's time to make that dream come true, because connecting with celebrity is cheaper than it's ever been before. At hollywoodiscalling.com, you can get such former household names as Erin Gray (*Buck Rogers*), Richard Hatch (*Battlestar Galactica*), Todd Bridges (*Diff'rent Strokes*), or the guy who played The Professor on *Gilligan's Island* to wish someone happy birthday, congratulate them on getting married or landing a new job, or simply say hello.

You can even have these pseudo celebrities perform a marriage proposal for you! Who wouldn't want Lou Ferrigno, TV's Incredible Hulk, to mumble-mouth his way through the most precious question that you'll ever ask someone? What a way to avoid what can sometimes be an incredibly awkward situation! And you just know your future wife will love you for doing it in the most romantic way possible.

Of course, if we're covering this in "Before The Bell," there must be some wrestling angle to all of this—and, have no fear, there is. Former WCW and TNA star Evan Karagias is available to make a phone call (maybe he'll sing a few lines from Three Count's "Can't Get You Out of My Heart" if you request it), as is Lash LeRoux, the former WCW star whose "Lashing Out!" cartoon currently appears in *PWI's* sister magazine *The Wrestler*. (Luckily, he hasn't charged us for phone calls to the office ... yet.)

There's one other wrestling superstar available for phone calls through hollywoodiscalling.com, and his name happens to be Raven.

Yeah, *that* Raven. The same Raven who has made a career out of being removed from society. The same enigmatic, misunderstood Raven who revels in his status as the poster boy of wrestling's underground. The same Raven who seems to hate everything and everyone.

The same Raven you could never, ever, imagine participating in something so undeniably driven by popular culture.

For $19.95, Raven will make a phone call of less than 30 seconds, but if you want to chat with him longer, you can get him to depress you for an entire half-hour by parting with a paltry $300.

Such is the price of celebrity in 2005—quote the raven, nevermore.

Talkin' Trash

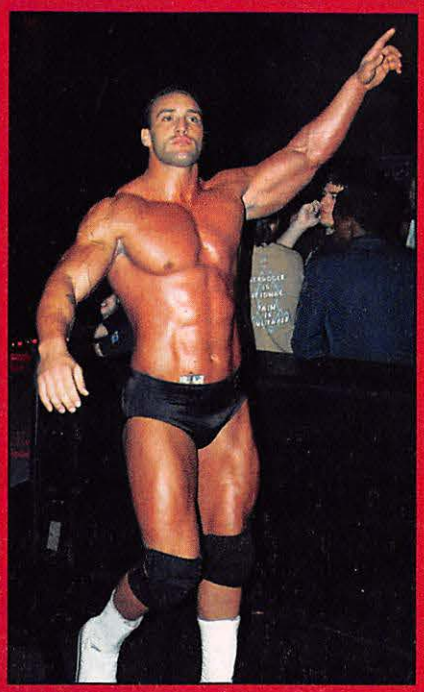
Here's a list of the top 10 wrestling-related things you've been talking about lately, and our gut reaction to each.

10. WWE announces the second Raw diva search. Jeez, we haven't even figured out the names of all the divas from the first one yet.

9. The push of Chris Masters. In order for "The Masterpiece" to get over, WWE might have to offer its fan base an art appreciation class.

8. Eric Bischoff's wife, Lorie, appears in *Playboy* for a photo spread entitled "Real Desperate Housewives." Uncle Eric may not longer be at the head of a major wrestling company, but there's no doubt that he's still on top of the world.

7. WWE releases Molly Holly at her request. With so many other talented women wrestlers in the mix, she won't be missed, right?



6. A.J. Styles defeats Abyss at Lockdown to become the number-one contender to Jeff Jarrett's NWA championship. Again?

5. Vince McMahon's rapid recovery from a pair of torn quadriceps. It just got worse for WWE wrestlers looking to milk a bit of vacation time following an injury.

4. Kid Kash is released from TNA. Probably should have happened a long time ago.

3. Hulk Hogan's return to the ring as an active competitor. The "Hulkster" always seems to get a free pass with fans ... just as long as he's been away from the ring for a bit.

2. WWE signs a deal with NBC Universal to bring *Raw* back to the USA Network this fall. This just feels right.

1. All those pro-Matt Hardy chants! Right now, Hardy's multitude of fans are very vocal. Edge's and Lita's? They're sliding down into the pits of their seats when those chants start.

The Internet Insider

The following wrestling-related items were culled from various wrestling-related Web sites—or were they? See if you can pick out the items that were actually reported on the Internet (which doesn't necessarily mean that they're true) and the ones we blatantly made up. The answers appear at the end of this column on page 11.

1. Reid Fliehr, Ric Flair's 17-year-old son, is in a bit of hot water. Fliehr lost an amateur wrestling match in sudden death overtime after his opponent performed an escape maneuver that earned him a point and, therefore, the win. The opponent then celebrated by performing Ric Flair's famed ring strut, which prompted Fliehr to rush him before the two were broken up. Both wrestlers were suspended for their actions, and the rival has brought assault charges against Fliehr.

2. Hulk Hogan has had special stipulations written into his contract for years, but recently they've become so quirky that other wrestlers in the back can't help but laugh behind his back. One of the oddest ones right now is that anytime he's supposed to be at a WWE show, there must bowls of red and yellow M&Ms (no other colors allowed) at specified areas scattered throughout the backstage area. Some wrestlers, in an effort to get a rise out of Hogan, are dropping brown M&Ms into bowls, while others are throwing in red and yellow Skittles.

3. Billy Kidman is asking WWE Creative for an overhaul. Tired of his lackluster push, he's requested that Creative come up with a new name and a new gimmick that would allow him to move up the card. He feels that both "Billy" and "Kidman" are too kid-oriented and have limited his ability to connect with older fans. So far, WWE writers haven't responded favorably to his request, as they're in favor of him keeping his current character.

4. During WWE's recent tour of Great Britain, a group of rowdy kickboxers got into it with some WWE wrestlers in the wrestlers' posh hotel lobby. As guests scrambled to get out of the way, WWE wrestlers manhandled the kickboxers, who were reportedly intoxicated and looking for a brawl. Said one hotel worker: "It was mayhem for about 15 minutes. The boxers were saying wrestling was fake and that the big guys couldn't fight—so [the wrestlers] just grabbed them." Though police officers responded to the scene, no arrests were made.

Bizarro 12 Questions With ... Edge

We value our health, which is why that there are certain questions that we'd never ask certain professional wrestlers during an interview. These are those questions:

12. So, how's your old buddy Matt Hardy doing?

11. Shower much?

10. Was Sexton Hardcastle, the name you used on the independent circuit, a bit of an ego thing?

9. Do you think there's any possible way you and Christian could have beaten The Road Warriors in their prime?

8. Do you think your spear actually compares to Bill Goldberg's?

7. How much hair conditioner do you go through on a weekly basis?

6. Do you and Christian still think you're brothers?

5. How hard is it for a pretty boy like you to come off tough?

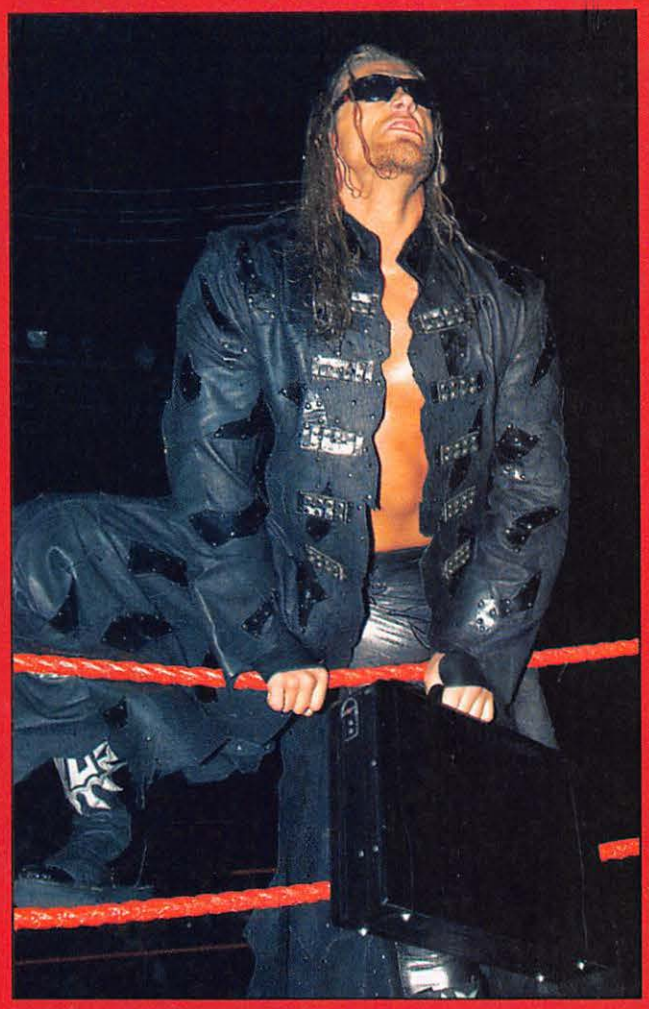
4. Was it odd that you were Hulk Hogan's little buddy for a short period of time?

3. Wouldn't it be nice if you heard more male fans cheering for you than female fans just once?

2. What are the odds that anyone will remember that you're the wrestler who unified the United States and Intercontinental titles?

And the number-one question that we'd never ask Edge:

1. Wanna meet my girlfriend?



We Heard That!

"It could be the Geritol match of all-time."

—Hulk Hogan, discussing a possible showdown between himself and Steve Austin, in an interview with the *Baltimore Sun*

"There must have been a lot of good mushrooms being passed around at that time."

—Kevin Nash, discussing his days WCW as Oz, in an interview with the *Pro Wrestling Torch*

"One of my 14-year-old daughter's friends had my picture up, and my daughter was really creeped out by that. They're not impressed. To them I'm just Dad."

—Batista, in an interview with the *Ottawa Sun*

"Well, Triple-H is the star of the show, and he's going to be the one focused upon ... It has been that way for the past five years. It was like that when I won the belt and when Benoit won as well. That's just the way things are."

—Chris Jericho, in an interview with the *Opie & Anthony* radio show

"I hate the word fake because the damage is all real. If you have a German suplex on the back of your head, you can't fake the look of pain that that brings—the human body is just not supposed to do this sort of stuff."

—William Regal, in an interview with the *Liverpool Daily Post*

"It's always fun to bring that suit out of the closet for sure. It's always fun to put that on because I feel like it's a whole different persona, and just being in it for even 15 minutes, it brings back a lot of memories."

—Stacy Keibler, talking about wearing one of her old Miss Hancock outfits for a WWE photo shoot, in an interview with wwe.com

April's Best

Simon Dean says, "You, too, can look as fabulous as these legends by using my patented Simon System!"

—John Herron, Marble Hill, MO

"Dusty, it's simple. One shake at breakfast, another at lunch, and then a sensible dinner."

—Frank G. Lloyd Jr., Richwood, WV

"Well, Dusty, you can't stay mad forever!"

—Tony Johnson, tony_johnson9@hotmail.com

"Tommy, I think I just ate Bobby Fulton and Tommy Rogers."

—Eddie Goldstein, happy2000@fuse.net

"Hey, Dusty, I don't want to cause any trouble, but your son's walking around backstage in a blond wig, touching himself all over."

—Shaun Stirneman, ststriker@yahoo.com

caption me!

Think you're a better writer than the editors at *PWI*? Here's your chance to prove it, punk! This photo of WWE's all-time greatest king, Mabel (a.k.a. Viscera) demands a short, concise, and downright uproarious caption. If you think you're up to the task, e-mail your zany quips to prowrestlingillustrated@yahoo.com, or slap a stamp on an envelope and snail-mail it to "Caption Me!" Box 1148, Fort Washington, PA 19034. Three issues from now, we'll share with you the best of the bunch—and the funnier the better.

Answers to Internet Insider:

Items 2 and 3 are totally made up.

ringside

With Will Welsh

CHRIS CANDIDO DIED on April 28, following complications from surgery to repair a dislocated ankle, broken fibula, and broken tibia that were suffered during a tag team bout pitting him and **Lance Hoyt** against **Sonny Siaki** and **Apolo** four days earlier. The cause of death appeared to be a blood clot. Candido was 33.

The grandson of wrestler **"Popeye" Chuck Richards**, Candido wanted to become a wrestler from a very young age. After training under **Larry Sharpe**, he broke into the sport with **Dennis Coraluzzo's** New Jersey-based WWA group, where his wrestling and promos turned heads. He eventually moved on to **Jim Cornette's** Smoky Mountain Wrestling. Once there, it didn't take long before his beautiful high school sweetheart, **Tammy Sytch**, became a regular in the promotion as well.

In 1994, Candido achieved one of his career highlights, defeating **Tracey Smothers** in a tournament final to capture the vacant NWA championship. He lost the title to **Dan Severn** just three months later, but with his name in the independents made, the WWF signed him and Sytch to contracts. Renamed **Skip** and **Sunny**, Candido and Sytch were the mid-'90s version of **Simon Dean**, obnoxious fitness buffs who loved picking apart overweight fans in the audience.

Not long after their WWF debut, **Tom Prichard** joined the duo as **Zip**, and **The Bodydonnas** were born. At WrestleMania XII, they defeated **Henry** and **Phineas Godwinn** in a tournament final to win the WWF tag team championship. However, a broken neck received at the hands of **The Smokin' Gunns** eventually led to him leaving the company and re-establishing himself in ECW.

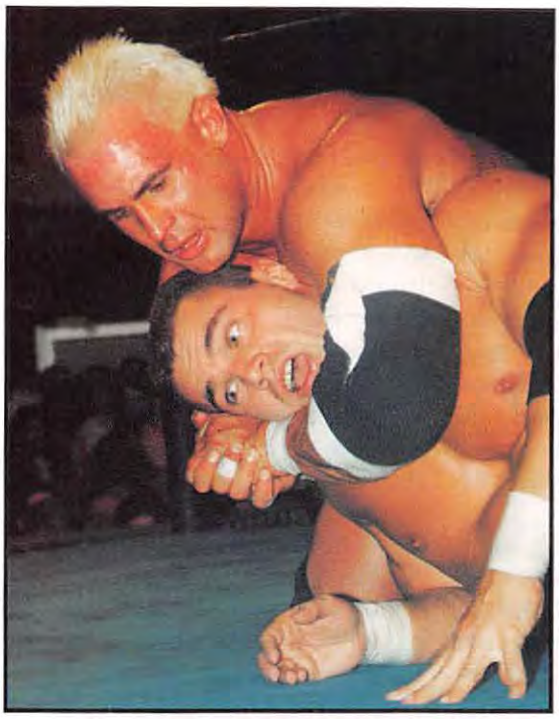
As "No Gimmicks Needed" Chris Candido, he received the biggest singles push of his career. He completely shed his over-the-top Bodydonnas persona and joined **Shane Douglas** and **Bam Bam Bigelow** in Douglas' **Triple Threat**. Later, while partnering with **Lance Storm**, he won the ECW tag team championship.

Candido's career took a turn for the worse beginning around 1997, when it became clear that he and Sytch had developed serious drug problems. The pair wore out their welcome in ECW and numerous other independent promotions, developing a notorious reputation in the process. WCW gave them a shot during the **Vince Russo** era, but their tenures there didn't last long.

Over the past few years, however, Candido and Sytch had cleaned up. Promoters started noticing Candido's improved mental status and saw a spark of the performer who was once regarded as one of the sport's best up-and-coming prospects. He landed a spot with TNA earlier this year, and he was doing so well with the promotion that he was becoming one of its locker room leaders.

In fact, Candido was so respected among his peers that even after the injury, TNA executives told him that he didn't have to worry about losing his position with the company and that they'd continue to use him and pay him during his rehabilitation. As a sign of their commitment to him, at the first *Impact* tapings following the pay-per-view, a wheelchair-bound Candido accompanied **The Natu-**

It's still difficult to believe that Chris Candido (pictured when he was a Smoky Mountain tag team champion with Brian Lee in 1994) has died, especially when he had just turned around what had been a tumultuous life.



Candido had success in every major promotion in the U.S. One of Will Welsh's favorite memories of him is his ECW feud with Lance Storm, who happened to be the co-holder of the ECW tag title with him.

rals to the ring for their match against NWA tag team champions **America's Most Wanted** and led them to the title. Candido died before the match aired, but TNA honored his memory by showing it in its entirety and concluding that episode of *Impact* with an image of him holding up one of the newly won title belts.

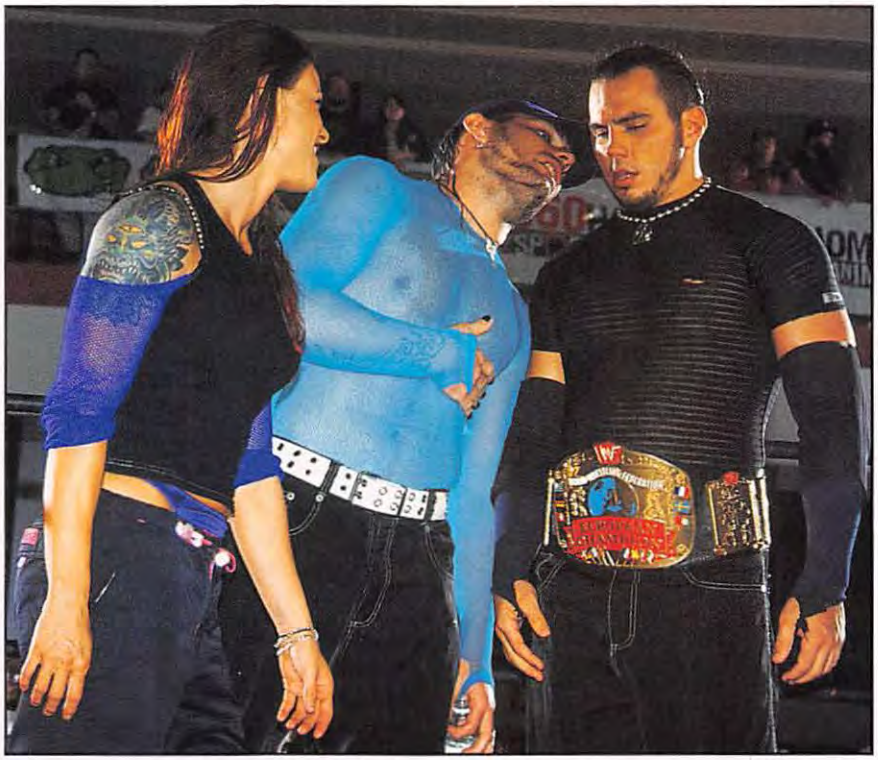
Candido's death brought forth an outpouring of emotion from the entire wrestling community. Both TNA and WWE paid tribute to him on their programs and their Web sites, and the wrestlers who publicly remembered him in the days following his death are far too numerous to list. My favorite memories of him will always be his days teaming with Lance Storm in ECW. As the storyline went, the two were reluctant tag team partners and even more reluctant tag team champions, but **Paul Heyman** refused to let them split from each other. To make matters worse for both, Heyman said that if they lost the title and he thought that either man wasn't giving 100 percent or was trying to throw the match, they'd both be fired. The result was a backward partnership and a wacky storyline that was always entertaining.

Candido's family has set up a scholarship fund in his name that will benefit a student from his high school. If you'd like to make a donation, please send it to The Chris Candido Scholarship Fund, Bank of New York, 3rd Avenue and Washington Street, Spring Lake, NJ, 07762.

WWE released **Matt Hardy** following a real-life love triangle involving Hardy, his long-time girlfriend, **Lita**, and **Edge**. Apparently, Edge and Lita began seeing each other while Hardy sat at home injured. Hardy, understandably crushed by the lack of loyalty from his girlfriend and his friend, posted a bitter online rant on his personal Web site. WWE management attempted to quell the controversy, but it took off amongst the fan base nevertheless. As word spread about the liaison, both Edge and Lita found themselves the focal point of rather tawdry chants whenever one or the other would appear in the ring.

Though Hardy was told that he was being let go in order to make room for new talent, it's clear that WWE management was upset with the publicity the controversy received and displeased with Hardy's decision to take the affair public. The decision to fire him, however, has made him an even more sympathetic figure—and quite possibly the hottest free agent the market has seen since the demise of WCW. As of press time, he was already said to be in talks with both TNA and Ring of Honor, though he has said that he'd more than likely return to WWE if offered the chance.

Other recent WWE releases include **Rhyno**, **Molly Holly** (upon her request), **Chilly Willy**, and **Jesus** (**Aaron Aguilera**).



Lita clowns around with both Hardy Boyz during more carefree times. Matt and Lita were the subject of a huge controversy earlier this year when Lita began a relationship with Edge. Soon, Matt was unemployed.

PWI TURNS 25!

Pro Wrestling Illustrated recently celebrated its 25th year as the sport's number-one publication in a very special way. Those who subscribe to *PWI* or spotted it at the newsstand in time got a treat. Not only did *PWI* produce a silver anniversary special, but as an added bonus, we polybagged a re-print of our very first issue, from 1979!

If you missed it, you won't have to wait 25 more years for a follow-up. A limited amount of both issues are still available!

Send in the order form below— before it really *is* too late!

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TNA released X division star **Kid Kash** following a long, drawn-out, contentious relationship with the wrestler. Kash, who had been very outspoken against TNA for what seemed like his entire tenure with the company, had basically been begging for his release for months. When he publicly ripped the promotion during an appearance on a popular Internet radio show, TNA executives had finally had enough. They released him despite the fact that he was one of the most well-rounded wrestlers on the roster.

I say good riddance. TNA made the right move here. Sure, Kash can be a spectacular wrestler, but he doesn't have a huge following and his presence backstage had become more of a nuisance for TNA than anything else. He wanted out, and he wasn't shy when it came to being vocal about it, either.

As of press time, there was no word on whether WWE was interested in his services, but considering his reputation for being a rabble rouser (Kash was outspoken during his ECW tenure as well), it seems unlikely that WWE would sign him to a contract. If WWE did sign him, Kash would have to drastically change his vocal ways; if not, he'd be shown the door quickly.

The rift between WWE and **The Rock**, which developed after WWE let Rock's contract expire without offering to extend it, has seemingly been repaired. According to reports, Rock met with **Vince McMahon** during WrestleMania 21 weekend, and the two men smoothed over hurt feelings and agreed to work together when Rock's schedule allows it in the future ... **The Ultimate Warrior**, who has become a running joke of sorts in some circles, created a stir during a speech at the University of Connecticut when he told protestors of his ultra-conservative viewpoints that "queering don't make the world work." Warrior also told an Iranian student to "get a towel" when the student asked a question that made it apparent that he disagreed with Warrior's viewpoint. Both the university and the College Republicans (the group that booked his appearance) offered apologies.

That does it for me this month, fans. Enjoy your wanderings. □

And you thought The Ultimate Warrior was strange when last you saw him in WCW? A lot of the folks at the University of Connecticut likely agree with that assessment now.

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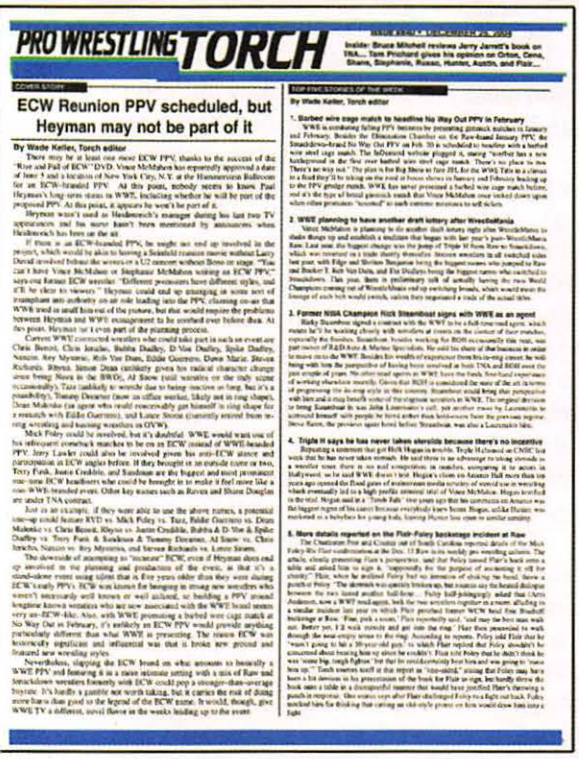

PRO WRESTLING TORCH

Inside: Bruce Mitchell reviews Jerry Jarrett's book on TNA... Tom Prichard gives his opinion on Orton, Cena, Shane, Stephanie, Russo, Hunter, Austin, and Flair...

COVER STORY

ECW Reunion PPV scheduled, but Heyman may not be part of it

By Wade Keller, Torch editor

There may be at least one more ECW PPV, thanks to the success of the "Rise and Fall of ECW" DVD. Vince McMahon has reportedly approved a date of June 5 and a location of New York City, N.Y. at the Hammerstein Ballroom for an ECW-branded PPV. At this point, nobody seems to know Paul Heyman's long-term status in WWE, including whether he will be part of the proposed PPV. At this point, it appears he won't be part of it.

Heyman wasn't used as Heidenreich's manager during his last two TV appearances and his name hasn't been mentioned by announcers when Heidenreich has been on the air.

If there is an ECW-branded PPV, he might not end up involved in the project, which would be akin to having a Seinfeld reunion movie without Larry David involved behind the scenes or a U2 concert without Bono on stage. "You can't have Vince McMahon or Stephanie McMahon working on ECW PPV," says one former ECW wrestler. "Different promoters have different styles, and it'll be clear to viewers." Heyman could end up emerging in some sort of triumphant anti-authority on-air role leading into the PPV, claiming on-air that WWE tried to snuff him out of the picture, but that would require the problems between Heyman and WWE management to be resolved ever before then. At this point, Heyman isn't even part of the planning process.

Current WWE contracted wrestlers who could take part in such an event are Chris Benoit, Chris Jericho, Bubba Dudley, D-Von Dudley, Spike Dudley, Nunzio, Rey Mysterio, Rob Van Dam, Eddie Guerrero, Dawn Marie, Steven Richards, Rhyno, Simon Dean (unlikely given his racial character change since being Nova in the BWO), Al Snow (said wrestler on the rudy scene occasionally), Taz (unlikely to wrestle due to being inactive so long, but it's a possibility), Tommy Dreamer (now an office worker, likely not in ring shape), Dean Malenko (an agent who could conceivably get himself in ring shape for a rematch with Eddie Guerrero), and Lance Storm (currently retired from wrestling and training wrestlers on OVW).

Mick Foley could be involved, but it's doubtful. WWE would want one of his infrequent comeback matches to be on an ECW (minus of WWE-branded PPV. Jerry Lawler could also be involved given his anti-ECW stance and participation in ECW angles before. If they brought in an outside name or two, Terry Funk, Justin Credible, and Sandman are the biggest and most prominent non-active ECW headliners who could be brought in to make it feel more like a non-WWE-branded event. Other key names such as Raven and Shane Douglas are under TNA contract.

Just to set example, if they were able to use the above names, a potential card could feature RVD vs. Mick Foley vs. Taz, Eddie Guerrero vs. Dean Malenko vs. Chris Benoit, Rhyno vs. Justin Credible, Bubba & D-Von & Spike Dudley vs. Terry Funk & Sandman & Tommy Dreamer, Al Snow vs. Chris Jericho, Nunzio vs. Rey Mysterio, and Steven Richards vs. Lance Storm.

The downside of attempting to "recreate" ECW, even if Heyman does end up involved in the planning and production of the event, is that it's a stand-alone event being aired that is five years older than they were during ECW's early PPVs. ECW was known for bringing in strong new wrestlers who weren't necessarily well known or well utilized, so building a PPV around longtime known wrestlers who are now associated with the WWE would seem very un-ECW-like. Also, with WWE promoting a barbed wire cage match at No Way Out in February, it's unlikely an ECW PPV would provide anything overtly different from what WWE is presenting. The reason ECW was historically significant and influential was that it broke new ground and featured new wrestling styles.

Nevertheless, slapping the ECW brand on what amounts to basically a WWE PPV and featuring it in a more intimate setting with a mix of Raw and Smackdown wrestlers formerly with ECW could pep a stronger-than-average buyrate. It's hardly a gamble not worth taking, but it carries the risk of doing more harm than good to the legend of the ECW name. It would, though, give WWE TV a different, novel flavor in the weeks leading up to the event.

TOP FIVE STORIES OF THE WEEK

By Wade Keller, Torch editor

1. Barbed wire cage match to headline No Way Out PPV in February

WWE is combining falling PPV buyrates by presenting a match nobody wanted in January and February. Besides the Elimination Chamber on the Raw-branded January PPV, the Smackdown-brand No Way Out PPV on Feb. 20 is scheduled to headline with a barbed wire steel cage match. The billboard website plugged it, stating "another has a new background in the first ever barbed wire steel cage match. There's no place to run. There's no way out." The plan is for Big Show to face HL for the WWE Title in a climax to a feud they'll be taking on the road at house shows in January and February leading up to the PPV grudge match. WWE has never promoted a barbed wire cage match before, and it's the type of brutal gimmick match that Vince McMahon once ranted down upon when other promoters "resorted" to such extreme measures to sell tickets.

2. WWE planning to have another draft lottery after WrestleMania

Vince McMahon is planning to do another draft lottery night after WrestleMania to shake things up and establish a mechanism that began with last year's post-WrestleMania Raw. Last year, the biggest change was the jump of Triple H from Raw to Smackdown, which was reversed on a triple shuffle shortly thereafter. Sources speculate an all-switched video last year with Edge and Christian Benjamin being the biggest names who jumped to Raw and Booker T, Rob Van Dam, and The Dudleys being the biggest names who switched to Smackdown. This year, there is preliminary talk of actually having the two World Champions coming out of WrestleMania end up switching brands, which would mean the lineup of each belt would switch, unless they negotiated a trade of the actual belts.

3. Former NBA Champion Rick Steamboat signs with WWE as an agent

Ricky Steamboat signed a contract with the WWE to be a full-time road agent, which means he's be working closely with wrestlers at events on the contact of their matches, especially the finishes. Steamboat, besides working for ROH occasionally this year, was part owner of R&D Auto & Marine Specialists. He sold his share of that business in order to move on to the WWE. Besides his wealth of experience from his in-ring career, he will bring with him the perspective of having been involved at both TNA and ROH over the past couple of years. No other road agents in WWE have the fresh, first-hand experience of working elsewhere recently. Given that ROH is considered the state of the art in terms of progressive in-ring style in this country, Steamboat could bring that perspective with him and it may benefit some of the slightest wrestlers in WWE. The original decision to bring Steamboat in was John Laurinaitis's call, yet another move by Laurinaitis to surround himself with people he trusts rather than holdovers from the previous regime. Steve Keirn, the previous agent hired before Steamboat, was also a Laurinaitis hire.

4. Triple H says he has never taken steroids because there's no incentive

Repeating a comment that got Hulk Hogan in trouble, Triple H claimed on CNBC last week that he has never taken steroids. He said there is no advantage to taking steroids in a wrestler since there is no real competition in matches, comparing it to actors in Hollywood, so he said WWE doesn't test. Hogan's claim on Howard Stern Radio more than six years ago opened the flood gates of mainstream media scrutiny of steroid use in wrestling which eventually led to a high profile criminal trial of Vince McMahon. Hogan levelled in the trial. Hogan said in a "Tonite Talk" five years ago that his conversation on America was the biggest regret of his career because everybody knew Steroids. Hogan, with the Hunter, was involved in a behavior for young kids, leaving Hunter less open to similar attempts.

5. More details reported on the Flair-Foley backstage incident at Raw

The Charlotte Post and Courier out of South Carolina reported details of the Mick Foley-Ric Flair confrontation at the Dec. 13 Raw in its weekly pro wrestling column. The article, closely presenting Flair's perspective, said that Foley issued Flair's beach over a table and asked him to sign it, "supposedly for the purpose of auctioning it off for charity." Flair, when he declined, Foley had no intention of auctioning the board, threw a punch at Foley. "The skirmish was quickly broken up, but sources say the heated dialogue between the two lasted another half-hour... Foley (still pilloried) asked that Chris Jericho, now a WWE mid-card, look the two wrestlers together in a match, dredging up a similar incident last year in which Flair punched former WCW head Eric Bischoff backstage at Raw. Fine, pick a winner. Flair reportedly said, 'and may the best man walk out. Better yet, I'll walk outside and get into the ring.' Flair then proceeded to walk through the near-empty arena to the ring. According to reports, Foley told Flair that he "wasn't going to hit a 39-year-old guy," to which Flair replied that Foley shouldn't be concerned about beating him up since he couldn't. Flair told Foley that he didn't think he was "some big, tough fighter" but that he could certainly beat him and was going to "make him up." Torch sources stuff it that report as "one-sided," stating that Foley may have been a bit devious in his presentation of the book for Flair to sign, but hardly throw the book onto a table in a disrespectful manner that would have justified Flair's throwing a punch in response. One source says after Flair challenged Foley to a fight out back, Foley watched him for thinking that carting an old-style power on him would draw him into a fight.

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in focus

By Dave Lenker

A STRANGELY STUNNING DEATH

I wish I had something profound to write about Chris Candido. He wasn't a friend of mine. Wasn't a trusted source of inside information about whichever company he was working for at the time (and he worked for all the major ones in the U.S. at some point). But his death still hit harder than most I've covered in my 12 years with *PWI*.

As strange as this might read to you, I think it hit harder because it was the premature death of a wrestler that *wasn't* drug-related. Preliminary indications suggest that it was a blood clot related to the surgery he had a few days earlier to repair a broken tibia, broken fibula, and dislocated ankle he suffered at TNA's Lockdown pay-per-view that killed him. Cover pro wrestling long enough and you almost become numb to the fact that so many stars die so young because of substance abuse issues. *Almost.* You just shake your head and wonder when someone is going to really do something about it.

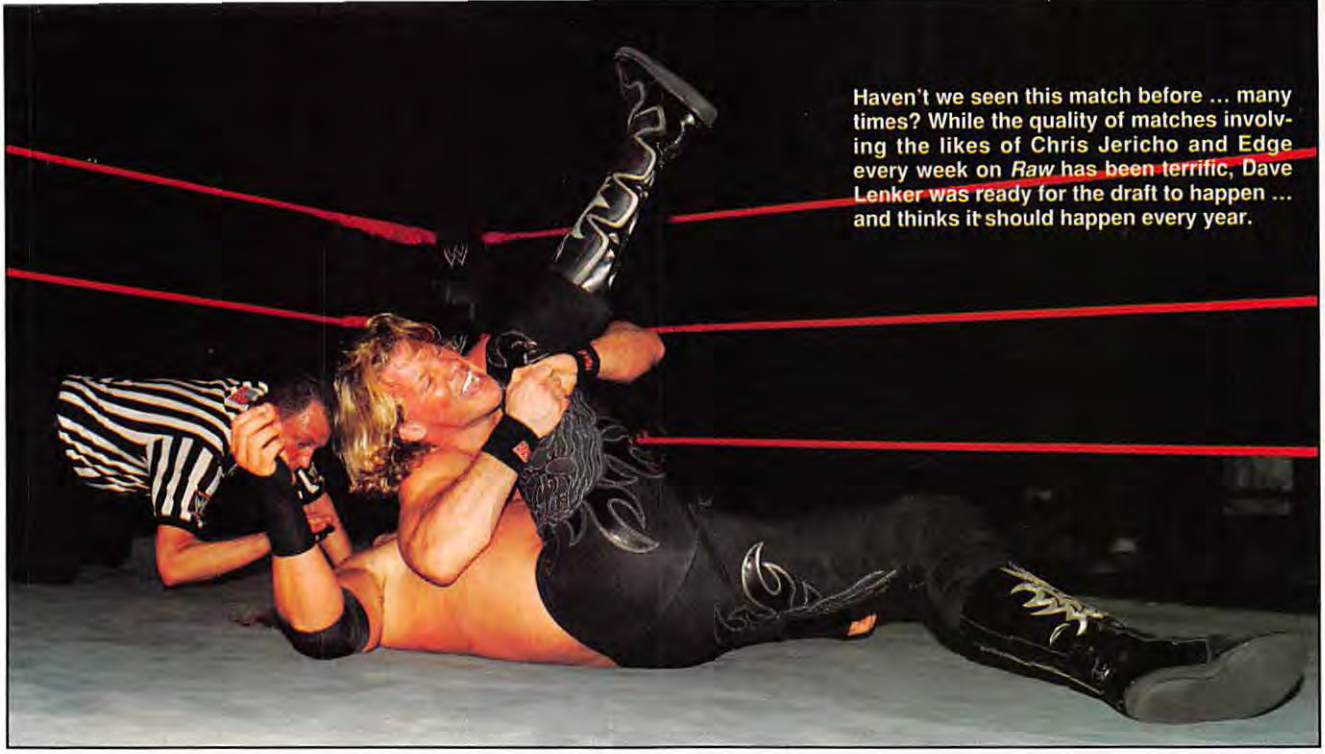
This will read harshly to some, but had Candido died a few years ago, few of us would have been shocked. In recent months, he had been quite forthcoming about his past drug problems, which were serious at one time. So for a young man who probably placed his life in danger multiple times in the past due to drug use to finally get himself clean and sober and get excited about his future again and then succumb to a simple blood clot, it's just so hard to take.

My first memory of Candido goes all the way back to 1993, a few weeks at most after I was hired as an associate editor. I was rounding a corner in the hallway of our old basement offices when I nearly crashed head-on into a bleached-blond young man and his girl-next-door gorgeous young lady friend. I mumbled an awkward apology and continued toward the restroom. A few minutes later, I heard from our photo department that Candido and Tammy Sytch had been invited to *PWI* headquarters to have some posed photographs taken that day. They were, I was told, just getting started in Jim Cornette's Smoky Mountain Wrestling at the time and were showing a lot of potential.

I had no idea who they were. None of us had any idea at the time just how far they would go in wrestling or what a mess their lives would become at their lowest point.

Chris Candido and Tammy Sytch were young, brash, and ready to conquer the world (wrestling world at least) when they first visited the *PWI* offices in 1993. Candido's death in April stunned a lot of people. His career was filled with a lot of highs and lows.

Candido and Sytch became frequent guests at our offices during my first few years with *PWI*. We all got to know them to some extent, and I always appreciated Candido's cutting sense of humor. And I said many times that I considered Sytch the most beautiful wrestling diva of all-time. It was difficult to watch them get swallowed up by the wrestling business as the years went on. And even more encouraging to see that they started to get their lives back in order before it was too late. Sytch, save for taking



Haven't we seen this match before ... many times? While the quality of matches involving the likes of Chris Jericho and Edge every week on *Raw* has been terrific, Dave Lenker was ready for the draft to happen ... and thinks it should happen every year.

the occasional low-profile indy booking, has smartly moved on with her life recently.

Now she has this horrible tragedy with which she must deal. The love of her life taken from her before either of them reached the age of 35. From what I heard about the wake and funeral, she kept herself amazingly composed, even urging Candido's friends to laugh rather than cry when thinking of him, because, as we hear so often about those who have just died that it's become a cliche, he would have wanted it that way.

Maybe Tammy is a much stronger person because of all that she and Chris endured during their years in the wrestling business. At least she can be comforted by the knowledge that he did beat his demons before he died and was truly happy. Maybe she's better equipped emotionally to handle all this heartache than any of us realize. I'm sure she'll get a lot of support from her friends in and out of wrestling. Plus she'll always have some wonderful memories of him. As will all of us who got to meet him and watch him at his best.

DEFENDING THE DRAFT

I suspect it's going to become an annual WWE tradition for at least as long as the brand extension continues, which could be for many, many years to come.

Not just the talent draft itself, mind you, but the debate over whether the draft should be an annual WWE tradition. It says right here that it should. Absolutely. Definitely. No doubt it. For sure.

I would probably make a change or two to the way it was done the first time. Maybe make the champions exempt from being selected. Or allow each GM to choose any two of his stars to be exempt from being randomly drafted by the other side. But to those who insist a draft destroys continuity within the brands, I insist that I just want to see the best possible wrestling shows every Monday and Thursday night and on pay-per-view. Isn't that what matters most?

I've enjoyed every Chris Benoit vs. Edge I've seen in the last year. There have been many. Same for every Chris Jericho-Edge match. Ditto for every Chris Jericho vs. Shelton Benjamin and Shelton Benjamin vs. Christian and even every Chris Jericho vs. Christian match. But enough already. The Raw mid-card is deep, but I think it was very telling that all five men previously mentioned in this paragraph plus Kane ended up in a six-way match at WrestleMania 21. There were no fresh one-on-one combinations among them left.

In much the same way, Kurt Angle, The Big Show, Booker T, Eddie Guerrero, and Rey Misterio Jr. have given us plenty of terrific matches in various combinations on the Smackdown side, but go ahead and try to find me a fresh match in that mix.

Give up already?

I'm writing this column a few weeks prior to the 2005 draft, but you move a few of these names or some other names—practically any few—from one brand to the other and you're going to create a bunch of fresh matchups in the mid-card ranks and probably have at least one or two new challengers to either the Raw or Smackdown title. Chris Jericho might seem stagnant on Raw after all this time, but move him to Smackdown and he starts fresh and looks like an interesting threat to John Cena's Smackdown title. Eddie Guerrero looks like he might never get another shot at the Smackdown title, but move him to Raw and let's see how he matches up with Batista ... or Triple-H. Or both. It's a whole new start.

Continuity be damned! Long live the draft!

*(Have a comment or question about "In Focus" or anything else you see in **PWI?** You can contact Dave Lenker via e-mail at dave_lenker@yahoo.com.)* □

off the top rope

By Brandi Mankiewicz

If you wish to contribute to Brandi's mailbag, send your letters to:
TOP ROPE Box 1148 Ft. Washington, PA 19034
Or send e-mail to: **offthetoprope@yahoo.com**

(Editor's note: The opinions expressed in this column are those of the letter writers and Brandi Mankiewicz herself. They do not necessarily reflect the editorial views of this magazine.)

IRONY'S A BITCH. The death of Chris Candido makes no sense (not that most deaths do). Despite a nefarious history that was riddled with self-destructive behavior, he will always be known to me as someone who would never intentionally hurt another human being. He was great for joking around, doing the cheesiest of things just because he could—like partaking in some of the wildest matches ever seen in our office.

I'll never think of Chris without his beloved Tammy Sytch. They were yin and yang. It had been impossible to think of one without immediately thinking of the other ... until now. Tammy's overcome her share of problems as well, but those seem like small waves compared to the tsunami with which she was just hit. I hope she finds the strength to live on, for Chris' sake.

Usually a final impression is a lasting one, so for Chris' life to end with him on the upswing and sober does him justice. I'd rather have his life end as the result of a freak accident in the ring than in a bottle of some sort. He was at his best in the ring, and that's how he should be remembered. While Chris Candido wasn't a megastar of Hogan proportions, he should always be one of your champions.

Dear Brandi,

Sorry to bug you and your red hair, but in the July 2005 issue I think you made a typo. You put December 13, 2005 in my letter when I was comparing the ratings from 1999 to 2004, it was supposed to be December 13, 2004. I'm not sure how you messed that one up, because you were basically copying what I wrote, but no one's perfect and I forgive you.

Any who, why is WWE trying to push John Cena? John Cena has good in ring skills, but it's hard take his character seriously. Most people don't like people who try to act ghetto when they are really not. Why would WWE think the wrestling fans would think any different? John Cena is not that great on the mike either. All he does is yell: "THIS IS THE CHAIN GANG! THIS IS HOW WE DO IT!"

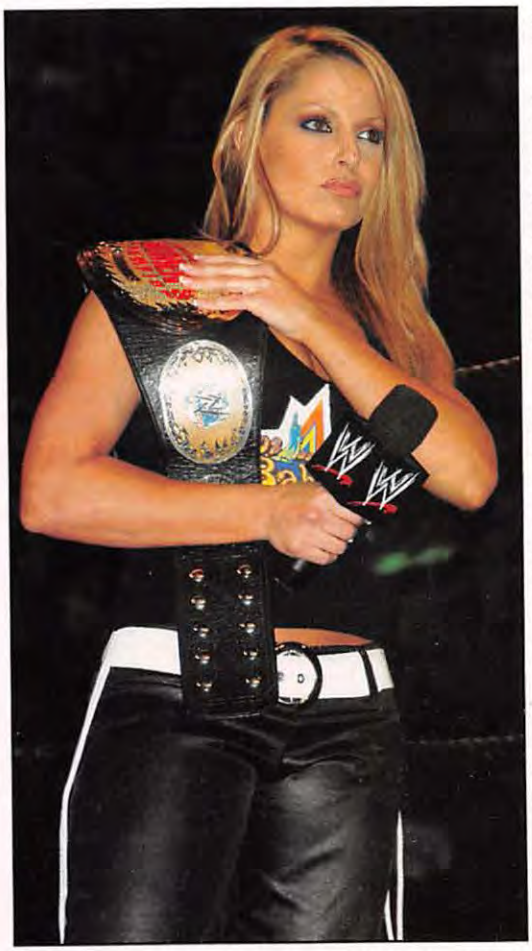
I find him very annoying. Probably how you find me very annoying. I have looked at the ratings for *Smackdown* on they have not changed a bit. I wish WWE would quit trying to shove him down all our throats.

MARTY HANSEN
MAMH121890TNA@aol.com
P.S. R.I.P. Candido

Marty,

I hate to bug you and your lack of fully enameled teeth, but I pulled your original e-mail from my letter database, and you had written December 13, 2005. I always try to lightly edit the letters I receive, so as to keep the integrity and spirit of what was written to me. Thus, I left your mistake intact.

Now, John Cena isn't my favorite person, either, but his Chain Gang crap isn't the reason for it. I just don't like fan-pandering buffoons, regardless of their rapping ability. My question to you is how do you know he's not ghetto? How do you know his WWE persona isn't an extension of his real personality and life? If you don't like him, don't watch him.



Why does Trish look so focused in this photo? It's because she's trying to overcome the seedy little notions of perverts like reader Kevin Lonergan. Stratus doesn't need fans that don't care about her wrestling.

Dear Empress Brandi,

It seems lately that the WWE is trying to make every wrestler on its roster a movie star. There's nothing wrong with that, as long as the movie is good, which sometimes it isn't. It started with Hogan,

then The Rock got this rolling, now you got Triple-H, Steve Austin, and John Cena all with movie deals. Hell, even Kane has a movie coming out! While there's no doubt that they'll make money for Vince and company, there is one superstar that could make a ton of money if promoted right.

I'm talking about Trish Stratus, the beautiful, lethal, boot-clad blonde who can steal any man's heart and sail away with it! I'd love to see her in a pirate movie, because she'd make a fetching buccaneer, especially in high-heeled, rimmed, laced-up leather boots, an eye patch, and a sword! I can see the other WWE divas in sexy swashbuckling outfits as well! I'd love to see Stacy Keibler walk the plank or having her feet tickle tortured by Captain Stratus, as well as Trish and Lita having a swordfight on the high seas! Throw in some kinky Bettie Page-style bondage, some Errol Flynn swordsmanship, and some *Matrix* movies, and I see a moneymaker! I even got a great title, *The Blonde Pirate*!

By the way, Empress Brandi, if you could make a movie featuring your favorite wrestlers (living or dead, WWE or TNA, etc.), who would you put in your film, and what type of movie would you make? Just curious!

KEVIN LONERGAN
Hyannis, MA

Dear Lowly Kevin,

Your first paragraph somewhat made sense, but then you made my skin crawl with the weird foot fetish stuff about Trish Stratus and the rest of the WWE divas. If you want to see a swashbuckling pirate movie with a hot blonde, go rent *Conquest* with Jenna Jameson from your local porn shop. Don't rely upon WWE's movie company to supply you with something like that. It's hard enough for a competitor like Trish to get respect as a wrestler when she's surrounded with non-bruised models. What happened to watching wrestling for the brilliance of a well-contested match? It's creeps like you who keep strong women from advancing in society. Go get your jollies from somewhere else, like curling.

Letter of the month (taken verbatim from the actual letter to share my torture with you all):

Brandi

I love your Magazine its great and 1 of the best ever. I have 2 questions. 1 is what do you think of C.M.Punk Colt Cabana and Ace steal Also Traci brooks I know them and there nice to me. Traci I know her to shes the best women in wrestling right now. I think so also for Shawn Daivari to say things about America when he lives here in the usa also he was trained and wrestled here he would be nothing with out C.M.Punk becouse I think that he owes credit to Punk becouse he got him to Ring of honor also Credit to Colt Ring of Honor and Ace Steal also How come when Punk was in the tna He was used bad. My second question is that I think that Terry Funk should be in the wwe hall of fame I recentlee met him and When I told him that Piper and Hogan were in it he was mad he was like come on I should be in it allready what do you think of Terrys Book? I have it I think its great he made wrestling hardcore I think so also I think that he is the best ever. He rocks he seams like 1 of the greatest of all time. I have dissablities so don't pick on my spelling please. Thanks Amanda Also when Is Taker comeing Back?

AMANDA
masters_sister_till_i_die@yahoo.com

Quick! Recall the conclave! That Benedict XVI dude hasn't completed nearly as many miracles as C.M. Punk. I think he should have succeeded Pope John Paul II.

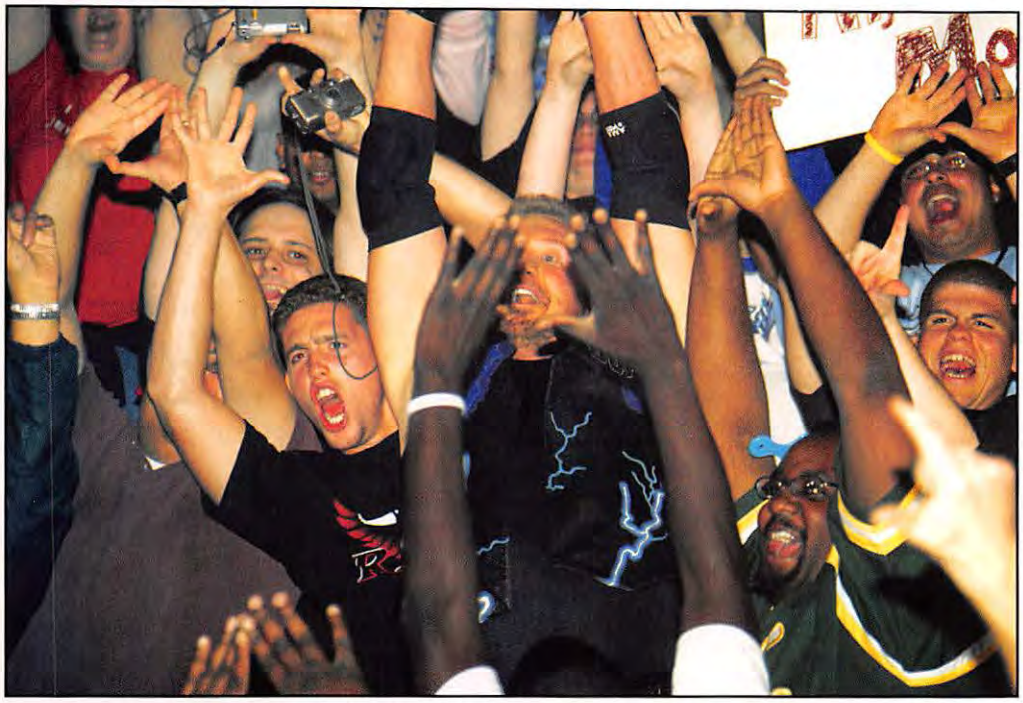
Dear Amanda,

I will not pick on your spelling, but as a person with a disability, I offer this kindly advice: Never use a disability as an excuse for not being the best you can be. If you're satisfied that what you sent is your best, then I commend you for even sending the letter. Otherwise, always strive to improve every day.

You've put C.M. Punk on a very high pedestal. I realize that Punk is the leader of The Second City Saints, but I didn't realize he actually was a saint. Did the cardinals know about his miracles of booking in Ring of Honor during their recent conclave to elect a new pope? I bet he would have won just for surviving a feud with Raven. Maybe his saintliness is what held him back in TNA. It is a hellhole, after all.

As for Terry Funk, he is definitely a legendary character, but the bulk of his success came outside of WWE. I can't see any reason for him to be inducted into the WWE Hall of Fame. □

press conference...



Even after a few years of retirement, DDP is still the people's champ (no offense, Rock). He's definitely one veteran of WCW and WWE that fans were thrilled to see added to the TNA roster.

Dallas Page

"DIAMOND" DALLAS PAGE never thought he'd be headlining pay-per-views three years after his retirement.

After all, what else was there for him to achieve? The man who defied the critics and broke into wrestling well past the age of 30—an age at which many wrestling hopefuls give up on their dreams and try to find gainful work in more traditional settings—had won three WCW World championships and became one of the sport's top stars during the biggest boom period in wrestling history.

When the cynics said he could never succeed outside WCW, he wrestled in the main event of the 2001 WWE Invasion PPV, competed and won at WrestleMania X8, and won one tag team and one European championship. While Page never became a factor in the WWE World title picture, he seemed to genuinely enjoy just being part of WWE and feuding with mid-card talents like Christian and William Regal. Page's WWE run came to a close in mid-2002, when he was diagnosed with spinal injuries that threatened to get worse the longer he wrestled. He gracefully accepted retirement as a man who had achieved his goals and walked away while he still could. And, as he might have said during those WWE days, "That's not a bad thing. That's a good thing."

But whenever DDP turned on the TV, he was taunted by the image of old WCW nemesis Jeff Jarrett showing off the NWA title he held with a death grip. Page remembered how he yearned to wear that NWA title long before he broke into the sport, and he remembered all the times he had pinned Jarrett's shoulders to the mat in WCW. When he saw Kurt Angle continue to compete at a superior level despite suffering spinal injuries comparable to his own, DDP looked at the TV and decided the time was right for a comeback. Page has made for a welcome addition to the TNA roster and could be on the cusp of adding another title to his resume.

***PWI** Editor-in-Chief Dave Lenker, Senior Writer Dan Murphy, and Contributing Writer Jason Langin met with Page prior to his Lockdown six-man tag bout, teaming with Sean Waltman and B.G. James (subbing for Kevin Nash) against Jarrett, The Outlaw, and Monty Brown.*

"I found DDP to be more loose, relaxed, and happy than ever," Lenker reported. "He has found a second life in TNA."

DALLAS PAGE: Oh, man, look at this! I must be in real hot water. *PWI* sent three of you boys to talk to me, including "Diamond" Dave Lenker. What can I do for you fellas? Take a seat.

DAVE LENKER: Nice to see you again, DDP. You seem awfully relaxed for a man just a couple of hours away from a major pay-per-view bout, especially since Kevin Nash is out of the match with a staph infection.

PAGE: Come on now, DDL, you know DDP always has a backup plan. Any of you boys up for subbing for "Big Sexy" tonight? Lenker and Murph, you both have some size to you. What's the new guy's name?

JASON LANGIN: Jason Langin. Nice to finally meet you.

"It's like old times. My knees pop, my back aches, my head hurts. But the moment I hear my music and hear that explosion from the crowd, I feel like a million bucks. I might pay for it the next morning, but I wouldn't trade it for anything. Best pain in the world."

PAGE: Jason here looks like he'd be more of an X division guy.

DAN MURPHY: I think we're all going to have to take a pass, Page. Not so much cowardice as it would be a conflict of interests. Even wrestling journalists need to maintain some sort of ethics, right?

PAGE: *Ha!* Ethics in wrestling. What a concept. Either you're pulling my chain, Murph, or you've already started on your post-show Guinness.

LENKER: How does it feel to be back in the ring, Page? I know it's a general question, but have you had much ring rust to shake off?

PAGE: Man, I can't lie. I've got aches and pains in places I didn't even know I had, brother. It's like old times. My knees pop, my back aches, my head hurts. But the moment I hear my music and hear that explosion from the crowd, I feel like a million bucks. I might pay for it the next morning, but I wouldn't trade it for anything. Best pain in the world, Dave. And about the ring rust—well, it feels like I never stepped away. Everything comes back to you quick.

MURPHY: Is this comeback a long-term commitment then? I mean, if you don't win the NWA title in the next few months, will you be willing to wrestle lower on the card, or is this comeback aimed entirely at beating Jarrett for the heavyweight title?

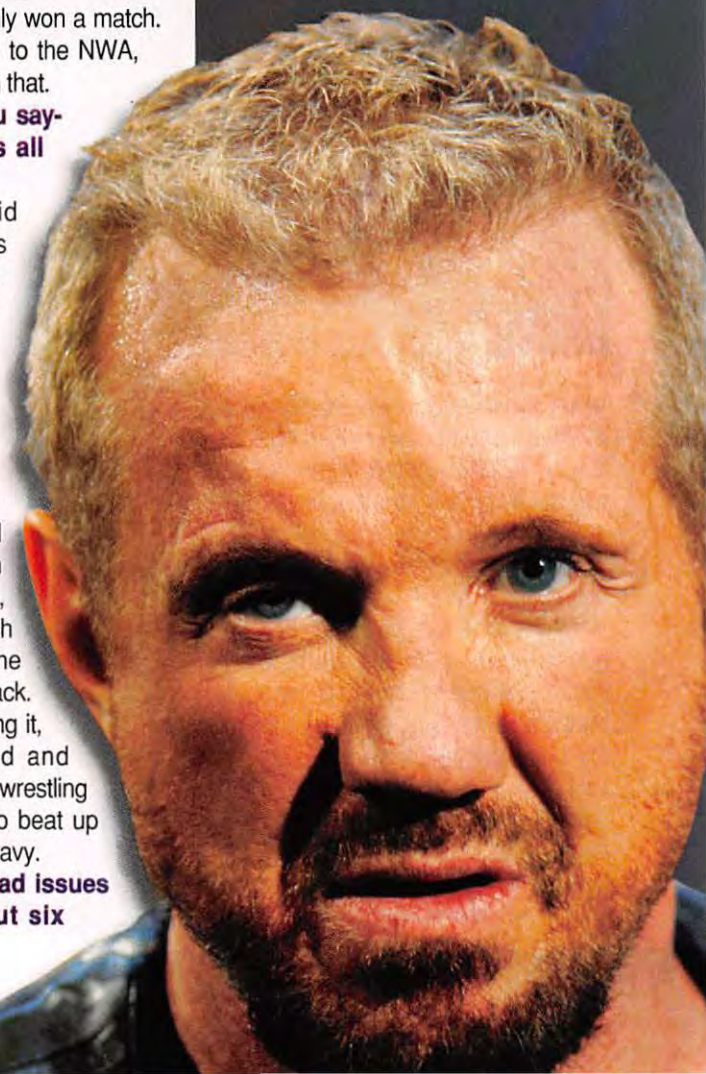
PAGE: I couldn't tell you, Murph. That's the truth. Listen, deep down in my heart of hearts, I felt I still had a lot more to give the wrestling business. I liked what I was seeing down here in TNA, everything except for that loudmouth Jarrett wearing the title. I can't remember the last time Jarrett cleanly won a match. Jeff Jarrett is a disgrace to the NWA, and you can quote me on that.

LANGIN: So are you saying your comeback is all about Jarrett?

PAGE: Maybe I did sorta say that, but that's not what I meant. Not entirely, anyway. I'm not the kind of guy who's happy just to kick back and watch poker on ESPN for kicks on the weekend. I feed on excitement, man, whether it was the nightclubs I used to manage up in Jersey, or riding my bike, or dropping chumps with the Diamond cutter in the ring. I needed to come back. I like to be out there doing it, not just sitting around and watching it. I needed my wrestling fix. The fact that I got to beat up Jarrett, man, that's just gravy.

LENKER: You've had issues with Jarrett for about six

Every issue, reporters from PRO WRESTLING ILLUSTRATED will participate in an incisive press conference with a top wrestling star. The questions will be demanding. And the answers will reveal the innermost thoughts of the giants of the sport.



Photos By Lee South

Apparently, the feud that DDP and Jarrett had in the waning days of WCW was never settled, at least not to Page's satisfaction. They had a hellish grudge match at Destination X in March (left and bottom). Of course, that grudge now has something to do with the NWA title.

years now, going back to Slamboree 2000, when you wrestled him and David Arquette in that triple-tier cage match. What is it about Jarrett specifically that gets under your skin?

PAGE: You know, that's a tough question. I barely remembered what started it all before you reminded me. I guess the easy answer would be that Jarrett is always shooting his mouth off. I had to work my ass off to get a break in this business. I made a lot of friends and a lot of enemies, but I made it on my own. Jarrett's a great athlete. When he puts his mind to it, he's a hell of a wrestler, too. His old man opened doors for him early in his career, giving him opportunities a nobody like me would have killed for back in the day. And what does Jarrett do with all that skill, all that opportunity? He gets lazy. He hits people with guitars. He recruits hired muscle to interfere for him. He uses every shortcut in the book and then makes up a few more of his very own. He takes the easy way out every time. I'm just not down with that. Maybe I can beat it out of him eventually.

LANGIN: Would winning the NWA title be enough to make your comeback complete, or would you want to try to have a nice, long reign as champion?

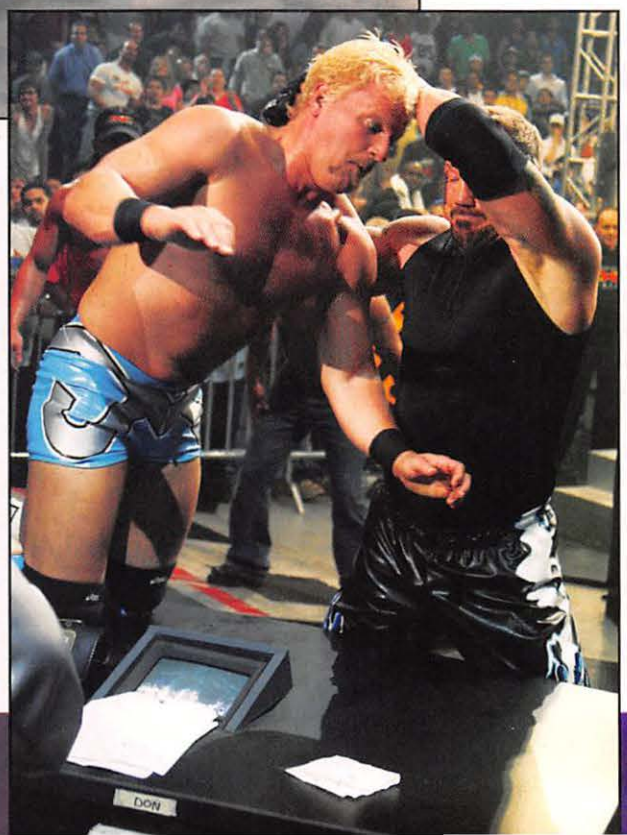
PAGE: All depends on how my neck and my back feel. The rest of my body, too. It depends on my head as well. You gotta have your head in the game at all times if you're going to be champion. It's called mental toughness. I'll know when it's time to walk away for good.

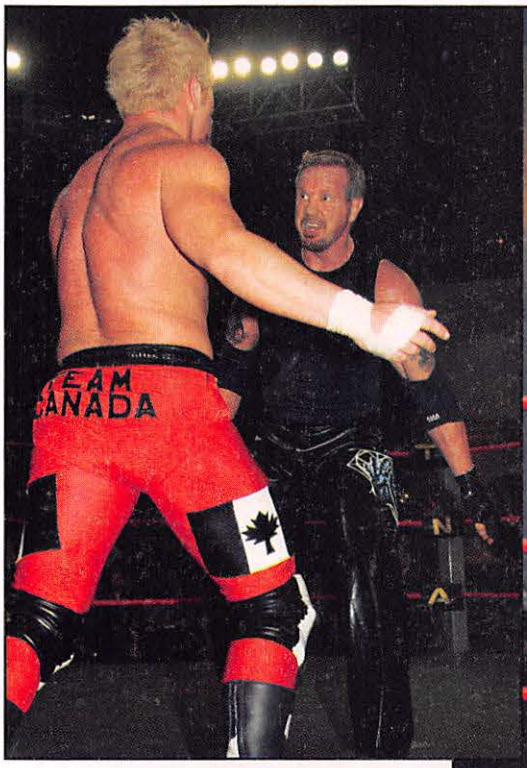
MURPHY: Why did you make the decision to come to TNA instead of returning to WWE? I imagine you would have been welcomed back there. You could have also been a great asset for OVW or the planned developmental territory in Atlanta, passing on words of wisdom to the younger guys. With your interest in being a motivational speaker, it seems like a natural.

PAGE: You're not trying to stir up trouble, are you, Murph?

MURPHY: Just asking a question, Page.

PAGE: Then I'll give you an answer. I had a great time in WWE. No regrets at all. But I really like what I'm seeing here in TNA these days. It's a hot scene, and DDP is always attracted to the heat, baby. I saw





Doing battle with some of TNA's hungry young stars—guys like Eric Young—has invigorated DDP. He's not sure how long he'll be sticking around, but if he continues having fun, it could be a while.

some real opportunity here in TNA and I'm glad I'm here.

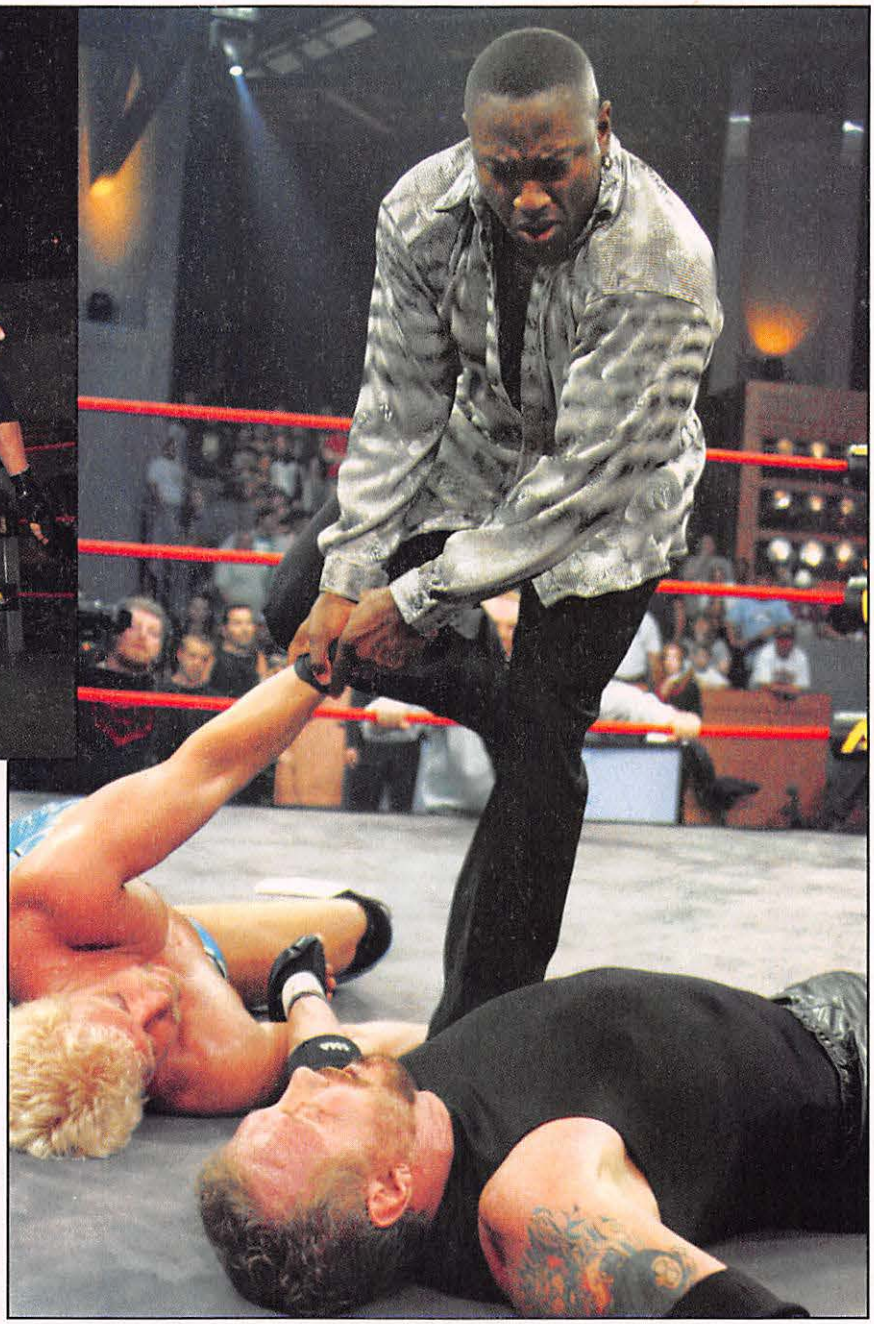
LANGIN: What do you think about Monty Brown turning against the fans and joining forces with Jarrett? You were his partner for a while, maybe even a mentor of sorts.

PAGE: To each his own, I guess. I'm not Brown's agent. I once told him you gotta go out there and grab what you want. Don't wait for opportunity to come knocking on your door.

LANGIN: But if you were pressed to give a comment ...

PAGE: Hey, I like this kid, Lenker. Get him a raise. Personally, Jay, I think Monty Brown made the biggest mistake of his career. He had all that momentum and he blew it. God only knows if he'll get another title shot. Maybe he thought he could make some noise by betraying me. How it gets him closer to the NWA title, I don't know. But hey, maybe money is more important to "The Omega Male" than championships. Let's get back to talking about me ... me ... DDP.

LENKER: TNA has brought in a lot of familiar faces, between you, Kevin Nash, Sean Waltman, and The Outlaw, among others. Do you feel like you're reliving the New Blood-Millionaires' Club feud again?



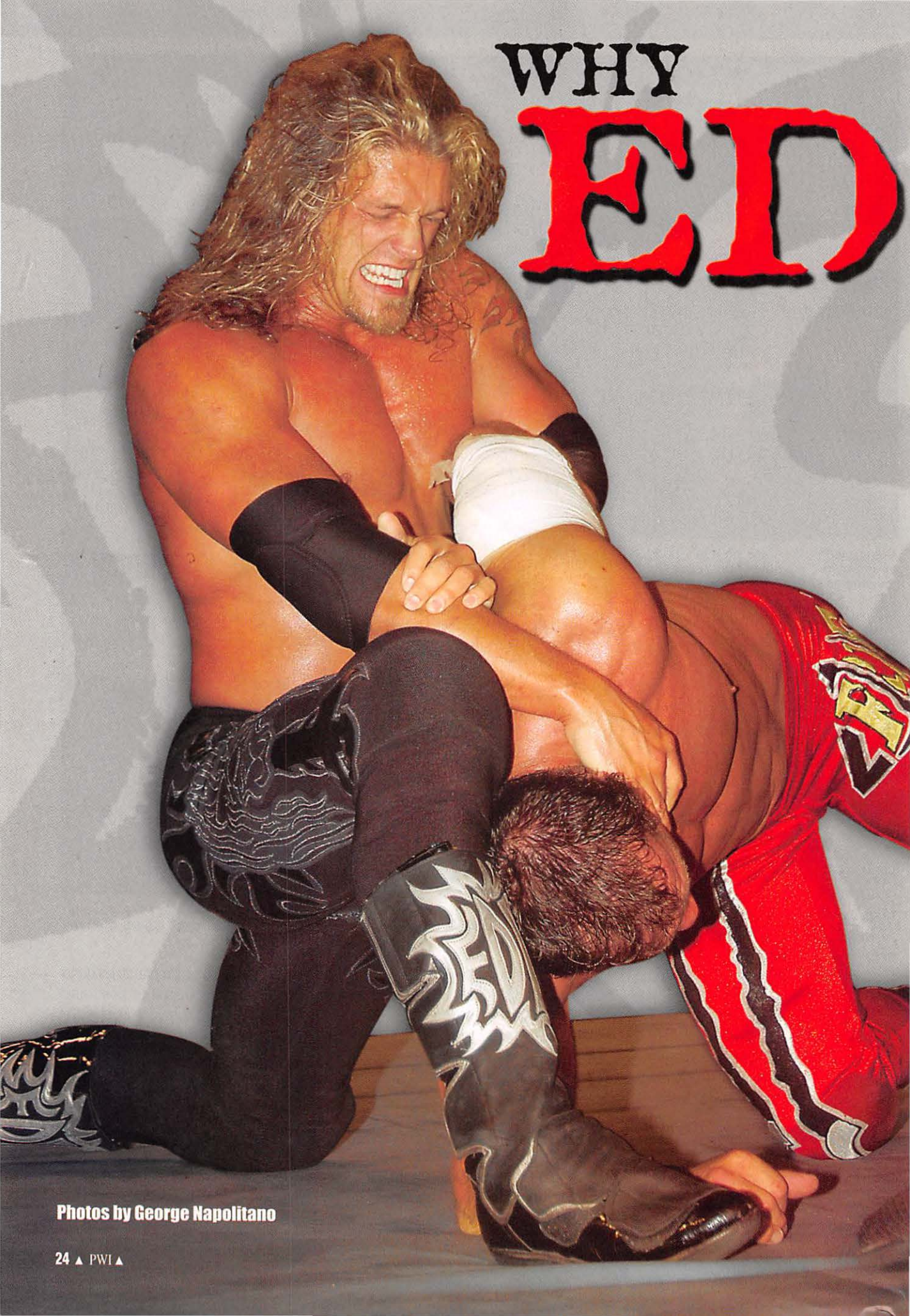
Only Monty Brown's interference prevented DDP from winning the NWA championship at Destination X, it seems. Other than money, Page can't figure out why Brown did what he did.

PAGE: *Nah,* it's not like that. The younger guys in TNA are pretty happy to have us veterans around. They can learn a lot from us, and we're motivated by them, so it goes both ways. Guys like me, Nash, and Waltman have had more exposure because we were fortunate to come up when there were a bunch of national companies out there and because wrestling was hotter than a pistol. If our names can attract more attention to TNA and help it continue to build and grow, that's great for everyone involved.

MURPHY: But how much further can TNA go with Jarrett holding the NWA title?

PAGE: Hey, Murph, haven't you been listening? That's why I'm here! Jarrett is a marked man. It's about time for DDP to become a four-time, four-time, four-time, four-time champion. *Good gawd,* Jarrett is going to feel ... the ... *bang!* Have mercy! □

WHY ED



Photos by George Napolitano

GE MUST SOLVE BENOIT BEFORE HE CAN WIN THE TITLE

By Jason Langin

IF ANYONE KNOWS the meaning of the word "intensity," it is Dean Malenko. During his pro career, Malenko was one of the sport's fiercest competitors, garnering the nickname "The Iceman" for good reason. So to hear him comment favorably on the intensity of Edge is clearly a compliment to the 31-year-old Canadian superstar.

Malenko was one of a handful of agents on hand to pry apart the Edge-Chris Benoit brawl in the bowels of Madison Square Garden on the April 18 installment of *Raw*.

"When I looked in Edge's eyes that night," Malenko noted, "I could see how determined he was. He was intent on tearing Benoit's head off. I think that if we let him go, he might have done it."

Since Edge made his return to WWE rings following a spinal injury a year ago, he made it very clear that winning the Raw championship was his number-one priority. But during that time, he has placed the blame of his *failure* to win that title on everyone but himself. And one of the people Edge blames most is Chris Benoit.

It isn't anything Benoit did or said backstage to hold Edge back. That isn't "The Crippler's" style. Benoit, in traditional fashion, has done his talking in the ring, and has completely befuddled his fellow countryman in many a match. It is making some in WWE question whether Edge is world championship material yet. Maybe Edge is silently questioning himself, too.

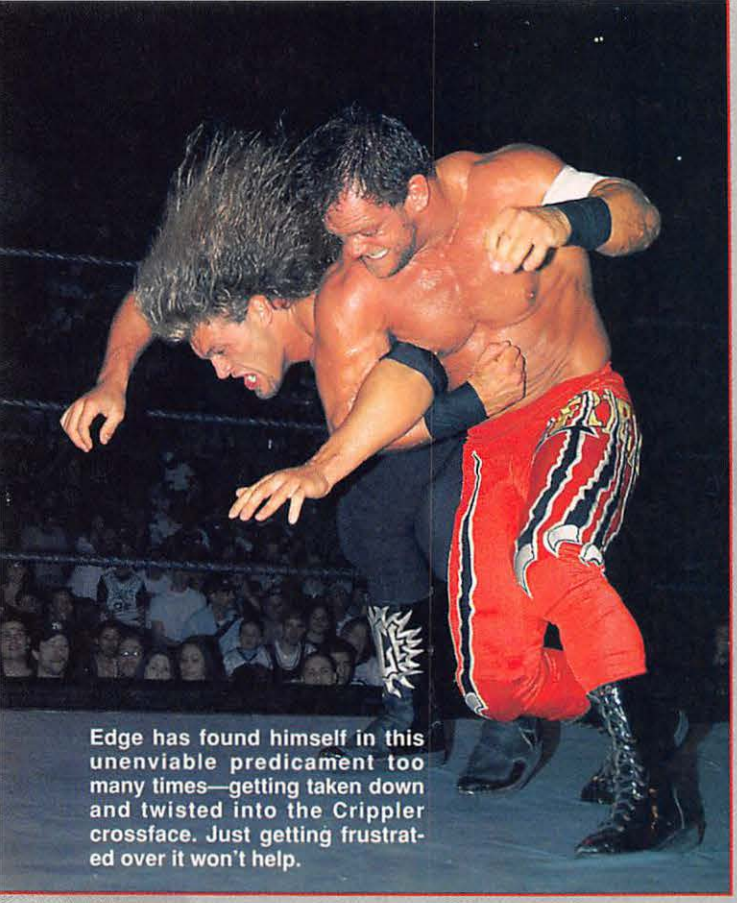
It all started at Taboo Tuesday on October 19, 2004, when Shawn Michaels was chosen by fans to face then-Raw champion Triple-H. The other two fan options, Edge and Benoit, were then given the opportunity to challenge La Resistance for the Raw tag team championship. This did not go over well with Edge, as he left his partner alone to face the talented but despised duo. Despite these overwhelming odds, Benoit secured the victory and the title for his "team."

"That really annoyed Edge," said Shelton Benjamin, who at the time considered himself his friend. "He was angry at being beaten out by Michaels in the voting and even angrier that Benoit showed him up in the tag match. I don't think it made much sense, but that's the way he felt."

Not surprisingly, this was not a long title run for the team. Edge just didn't have it in him to team with Benoit. Finally, after an unsuccessful venture in January's "Elimination Chamber" and in the Royal Rumble, Edge had reached his breaking point. In every ensuing interview, the man seemed closer and closer to snapping.

Things changed, however, at WrestleMania 21. In one of the night's more exhilarating matches, Edge outlasted Benoit and four other competitors to win the "Money In The Bank" ladder match. With this victory, Edge guaranteed himself a title shot. He could challenge for the Raw championship at any time in the upcoming year.

But just when it seemed like Edge was on the top of



Edge has found himself in this unenviable predicament too many times—getting taken down and twisted into the Crippler crossface. Just getting frustrated over it won't help.

"Benoit ... has done his talking in the ring, and has completely befuddled his fellow countryman in many a match. It is making some in WWE question whether Edge is world championship material yet. Maybe Edge is silently questioning himself, too."

the world, things came crumbling down once again. The very next night on *Raw*, Benoit embarrassed Edge in a one-on-one encounter. It wasn't that he totally dominated the match—far from it. Edge controlled much of it, and given the condition of Benoit's arm, he should have won easily. "The Crippler," however, found a way. Hence the embarrassment.

"I'm not taking anything away from Edge," said Chris Jericho, who also participated in the

Benoit has used the sharpshooter to fluster and hurt Edge many a time (left) ... and series upon series upon series of German suplexes (above) to wrench his back. Solving Benoit might be the last big test Edge must pass before he can become Raw champ.

Edge has smartly worked on Benoit's ailing arm recently, but that strategy hasn't always worked. A man worthy of a world title should always have backup plans.

WrestleMania ladder match. "But that match could have gone anyone's way. That's the way it is in those types of matches. To beat Benoit straight up, though, that's a different story. Edge was livid after he lost that night. I've never seen the jackass so mad."

Perhaps Edge realized that in order to become a world champion, he would need to defeat a wrestler the caliber of Benoit, something few individuals have been able to do cleanly. A former Raw champion himself, Benoit is regarded the world over as one of the best wrestlers to ever step foot into a ring.

That isn't to say that Edge can't put together an impressive resume as well. But it means very little when you are struggling to find a way out of one of Benoit's many torturous submission holds.

"If he can show me he has it in him to beat Benoit decisively—more than once if possible—then I'll be man enough to say the guy has the goods to be the top guy around here," said Shawn Michaels. "If he can do that, then he'll have shown me he's smart enough and determined enough to make adjustments and figure a guy as good as Benoit out. That's what being the [Raw] champion is all about. You better not duck anyone, and you better be ready for every kind of challenger and have a plan for every kind of challenger. He took a good first step at Backlash by beating Benoit in a last-man-standing match, but I still want to see what he can do in a regular match. You know, where you can't pull out a brick and use it as a weapon."

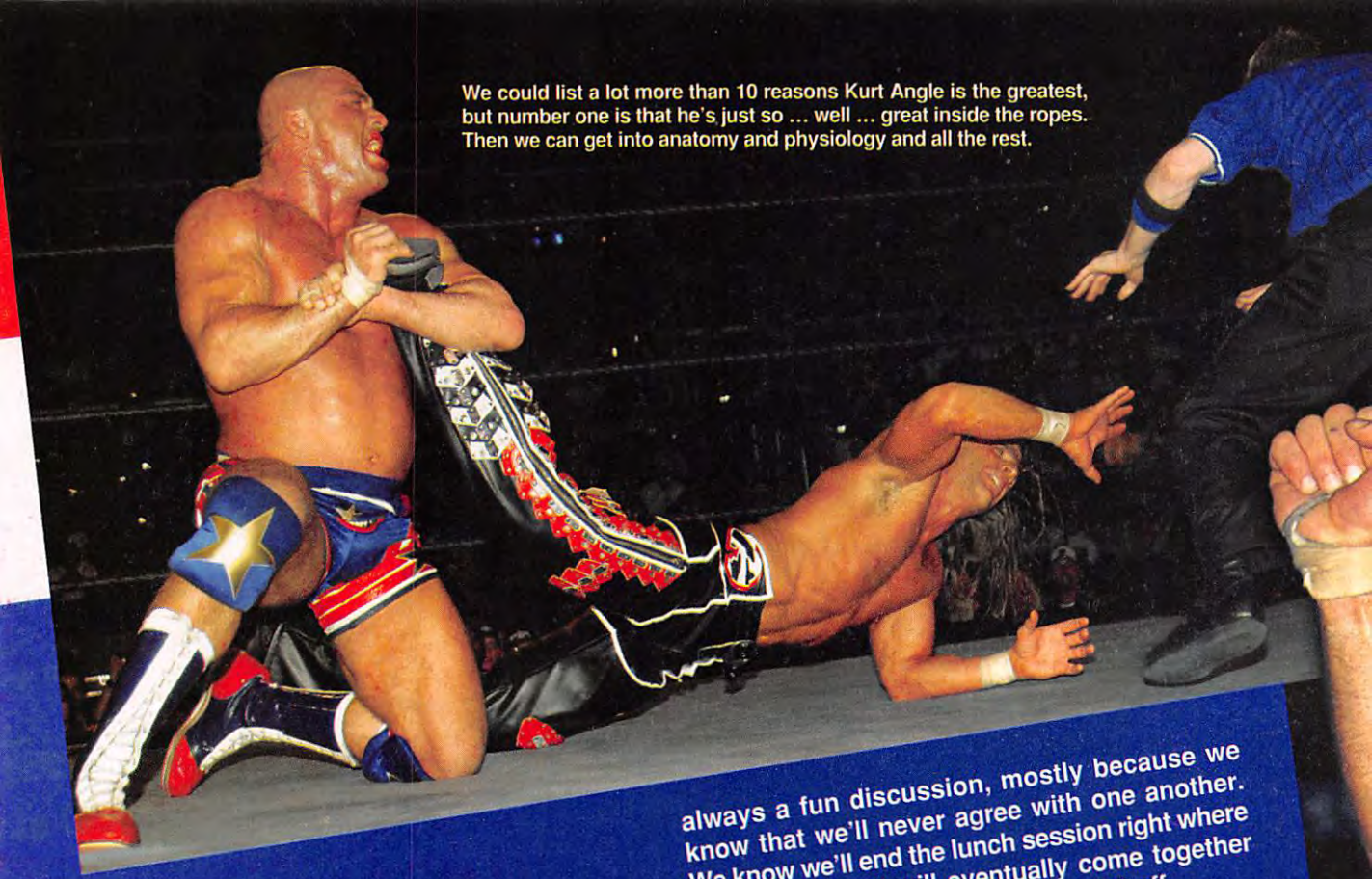
Before all-time NBA great Michael Jordan built a championship dynasty in Chicago, he and the Bulls were continuously befuddled by the tough Detroit Pistons. It wasn't until MJ was able to topple Motown's Bad Boys that he was able to win his first NBA crown. No one said the best thing that could happen to Jordan and the Bulls would be to somehow avoid facing the Pistons in the postseason. They needed to face Detroit head-on and find a way to beat them. They did that in 1991, sweeping them in the Eastern Conference finals before besting the Los Angeles Lakers in the NBA finals to get Jordan his first of what would be six rings.

If Edge is ever to reach the promised land of the Raw championship, he, too, needs to stand up to and overcome his greatest obstacle, Chris Benoit.

It won't be easy, though, as Benoit is well known for his toughness, determination, and ability to absorb punishment. Benoit's sculpted physique and incredible endurance make him much like the superhero with whom he shares a nickname: Wolverine. This comic book character possesses a power known as a healing factor that enables him to recover from injury at a much faster rate than your average human. That is the world of fantasy, however; Benoit is very real.

Edge believes he has the talent to be successful against Benoit. If he is, and perhaps *only* if he is, he might be ready to finally take that next huge step. □

Perhaps Edge felt he could surprise Benoit by going to the top rope. Not so fast! "The Crippler" was ready to foil him. Edge better not think his issues with Benoit will just go away.



We could list a lot more than 10 reasons Kurt Angle is the greatest, but number one is that he's just so ... well ... great inside the ropes. Then we can get into anatomy and physiology and all the rest.

By Will Welsh

WHO IS THE best ever? The debate is constantly on. It occurs in schools, office buildings, and probably even the occasional church gathering, and it involves people from all walks of life. Fans of professional wrestling, whether they're students, teachers, corporate business types, or blue-collar laborers, have it out with one another whenever they get together. They can't help but discuss the topic because it's so much fun. Even wrestlers have been known to spend long hours discussing the pros and cons of those men they perceive to be the best ever.

For the longest time, there was no right or wrong answer to the question. Everyone had an opinion, and in many ways, everyone was right. How can you argue against Ric Flair or Hulk Hogan? Bret Hart or Shawn Michaels? Lou Thesz or Harley Race? Steve Austin or The Rock? Even Triple-H deserves to be included in such a discussion.

Not surprisingly, we often take up this discussion as well. It's common lunchtime fodder. We'll huddle around a pizza or a tray of cheesesteaks and begin hammering away on everyone else's candidate while also trying to present a convincing argument on the merits of ours. It's always a fun discussion, mostly because we know that we'll never agree with one another. We know we'll end the lunch session right where we began it and will eventually come together another day and pick up where we left off.

Until recently, that is. Shortly after WrestleMania 21, we had another one of our famous lunches and immediately delved into our "best ever" discussion. We weren't expecting anything to be resolved, but as Kurt Angle's name began making its way into the fray, we noticed something changing. It was as if his WrestleMania match with Shawn Michaels triggered something in the synapses of our brains—and once we saw the light, we couldn't turn away from it. After 40 minutes of discussion on a slightly cool and breezy spring day, we had finally agreed on a best ever: Kurt Angle.

Here's why we came to that conclusion:

1. Incredible wrestling acumen. Chris Benoit, Eddie Guerrero, Shawn Michaels, Bret Hart ... these names are thrown around when it comes time to discuss the best in-ring technician in the sport's history, but none of these men compares to Angle. The former Olympic gold medalist owns the space inside the ropes. When he's ready to dance, there's simply nobody better. Not only can he stretch an opponent more thoroughly than the legendary Stu Hart, he's also the sport's human suplex ma-

Photos By George Napolitano

Kurt Angle

The 10 Reasons He's The Best Ever

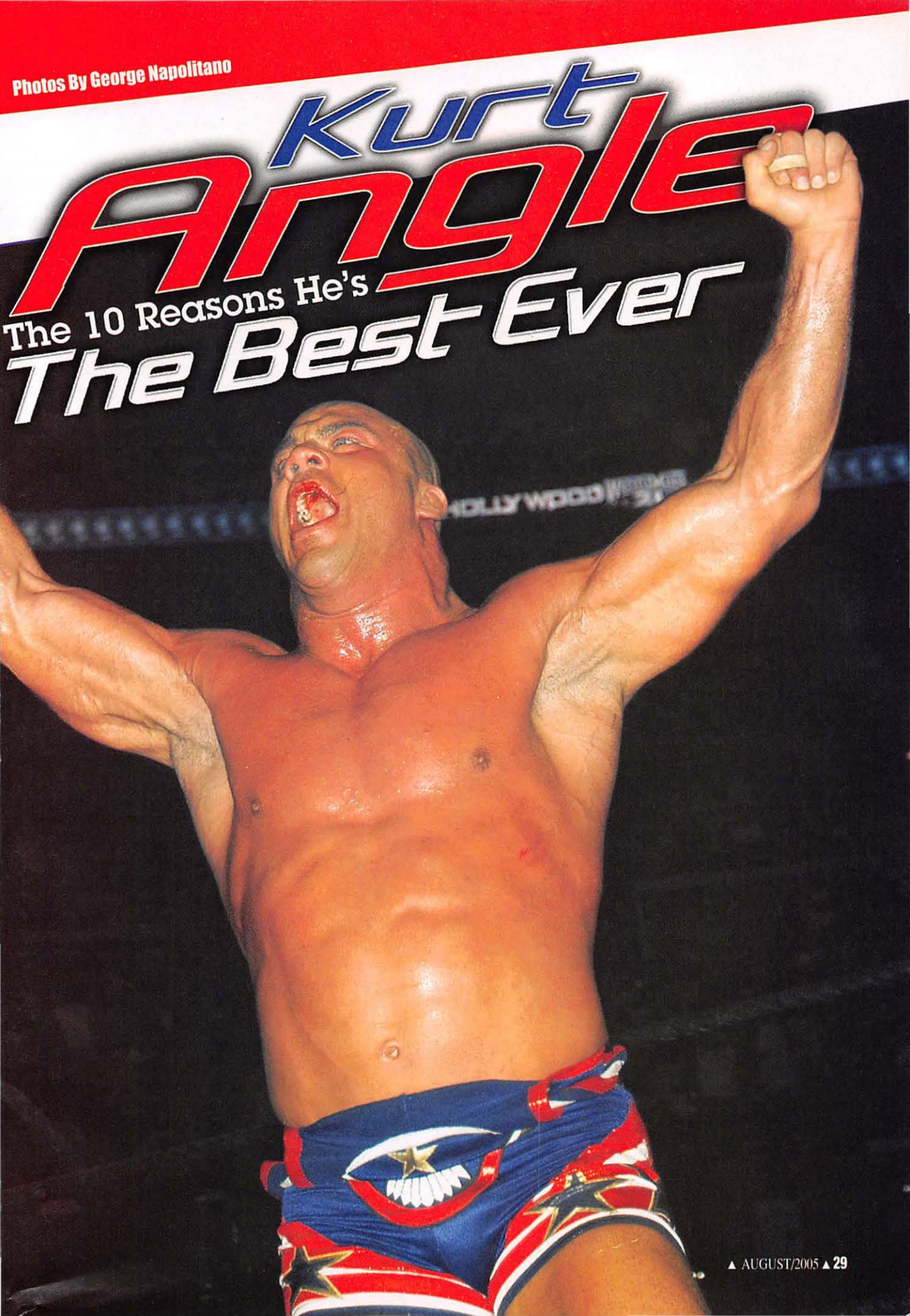
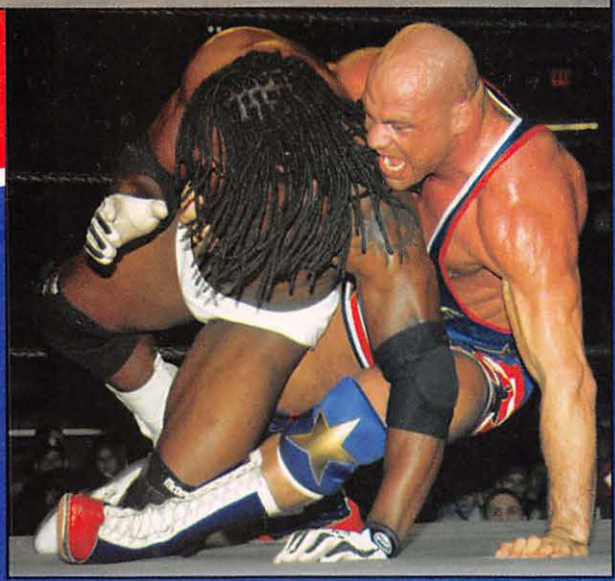


Photo By Duane Long



You can notice the depth of amateur wrestling skill Angle has at his disposal whenever he's on the mat (above and right). Other stars from the amateur world have taken notice as well.

chine (sorry, Tazz). Then, when he's looking for some extra pizzazz, he can ascend to the top rope and come flying off with a beautiful moonsault. He's the complete package.

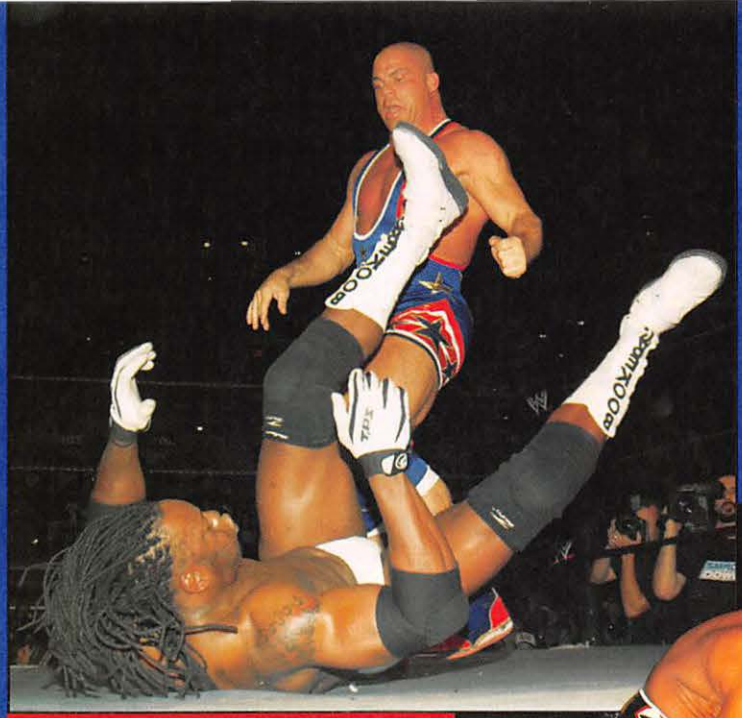
2. Highly knowledgeable about anatomy and physiology. This isn't science class all of a sudden, but this is an important point to make because it relates to Angle's uncanny ability to counter any hold or maneuver, no matter how hard to escape it has proven to be in the past. Angle's years as an amateur wrestler provided him with a great study of human anatomy and physiology. He knows how the body works and to what degrees it'll stretch and bend before breaking, and he uses this knowledge to great advantage, which is why not even the sport's top submission specialists can keep him locked down for long.

3. Exceptional quality of opposition. We don't want to sling mud at wrestlers from other eras, but today's wrestlers are of a different quality. They're more athletic and dangerous inside the ring than ever before, which means that if you're successful on today's circuit, you're at the peak of the very best this sport has ever had to offer. For example, Flair made his name to some extent against one-dimensional opponents such as Nikita Koloff, who got by mostly on power. True, he also had some amazingly skilled rivals, such as Rick Steamboat. But we'll put Angle's overall quality of opposition up there with that of anyone from any era. He hasn't had many easy nights. Even most of his larger foes are versatile and can really go.

4. Promo king. Angle's ability on the microphone is equal to that of any other superstar—and it has been since the moment he stepped foot in WWE. He's just as adept at delivering a solo promo as he is at bantering with an opponent. He's also equally proficient in delivering promos with serious and comical approaches. If there's a microphone in his hand, there's nothing that he can't sell.

5. Mr. Adaptable. When Angle debuted, he heard a few chants of "Boring!" as WWE's fan base wasn't quite ready to back a straight-laced, goody-two-shoes Olympic hero. However, when they saw his comical side, he quickly became an underground fan favorite. Since then, he's proven himself effective in both serious and comedic roles, and he's even shown an ability to carry the ball when not being able to wrestle, as he recently did during his run as Smackdown general manager. It's just another reason why he's so valuable to WWE: Vince McMahon can plug him into any situation and feel confident in what the final result will be.

6. Drive to succeed. If you've read Angle's autobiography, *It's True! It's True!* then you know how much he sacrificed in order to achieve his dream of wrestling in the 1996 Olympics. Well, Angle

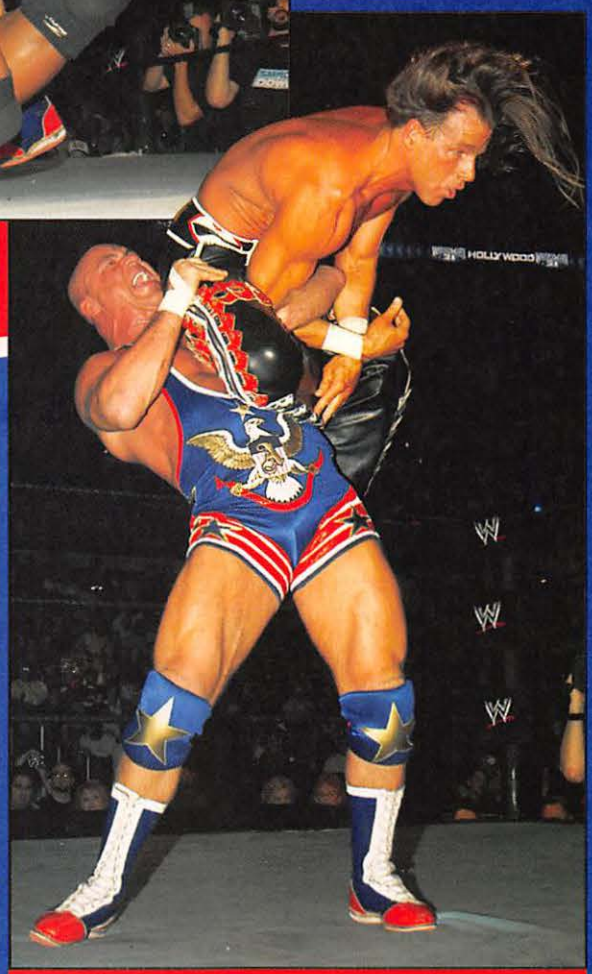


Okay, tonight's opponent is Booker T. You can be sure Angle knows how to go about beating Booker. He has so many different kinds of skills. His versatility is astounding.

took that same determination to WWE, and he still displays it to this very day. When Angle wants something, it's going to be hard to keep him from getting it. He pursues it and pursues it like a rabid wolverine (apologies to Chris Benoit), and he doesn't rest until he's accomplished his goal. Aside from Triple-H, nobody else on the WWE roster displays such an unyielding passion for success. While so many other wrestlers seem to enjoy just being part of the show, Angle isn't happy until he *is* the show.

7. Impervious to pain? We all know that every time a wrestler steps into the ring, he or she is putting aside some kind of pain in order to compete. Whether that pain happens to be the end result of simple bumps and bruises or severe nerve damage, however, is another matter entirely. Ever since he underwent neck surgery in 2003, Angle's been far from 100 percent. In fact, some reports indicate that he's lost a significant amount of strength in both arms and gets by in the ring on sheer testosterone and bravado. He also reportedly suffers from shooting pain and numbness in his extremities at times. If that's the case, and there's no reason to doubt that it is, Angle's ability to wrestle through pain is astounding. No, in this respect, he might not be the brightest guy, but he's one of the gutsiest to ever step into the ring. No wonder he was able to win a gold medal with a broken neck.

8. Going to extremes. Angle doesn't go this route too often, but he'll occasionally shed his all-American image in order to throw down an extreme whoopin' on an opponent. His grotesque streetfight against Shane McMahon at King of the Ring 2001 is a testament to the lengths he'll go in order to win a match.



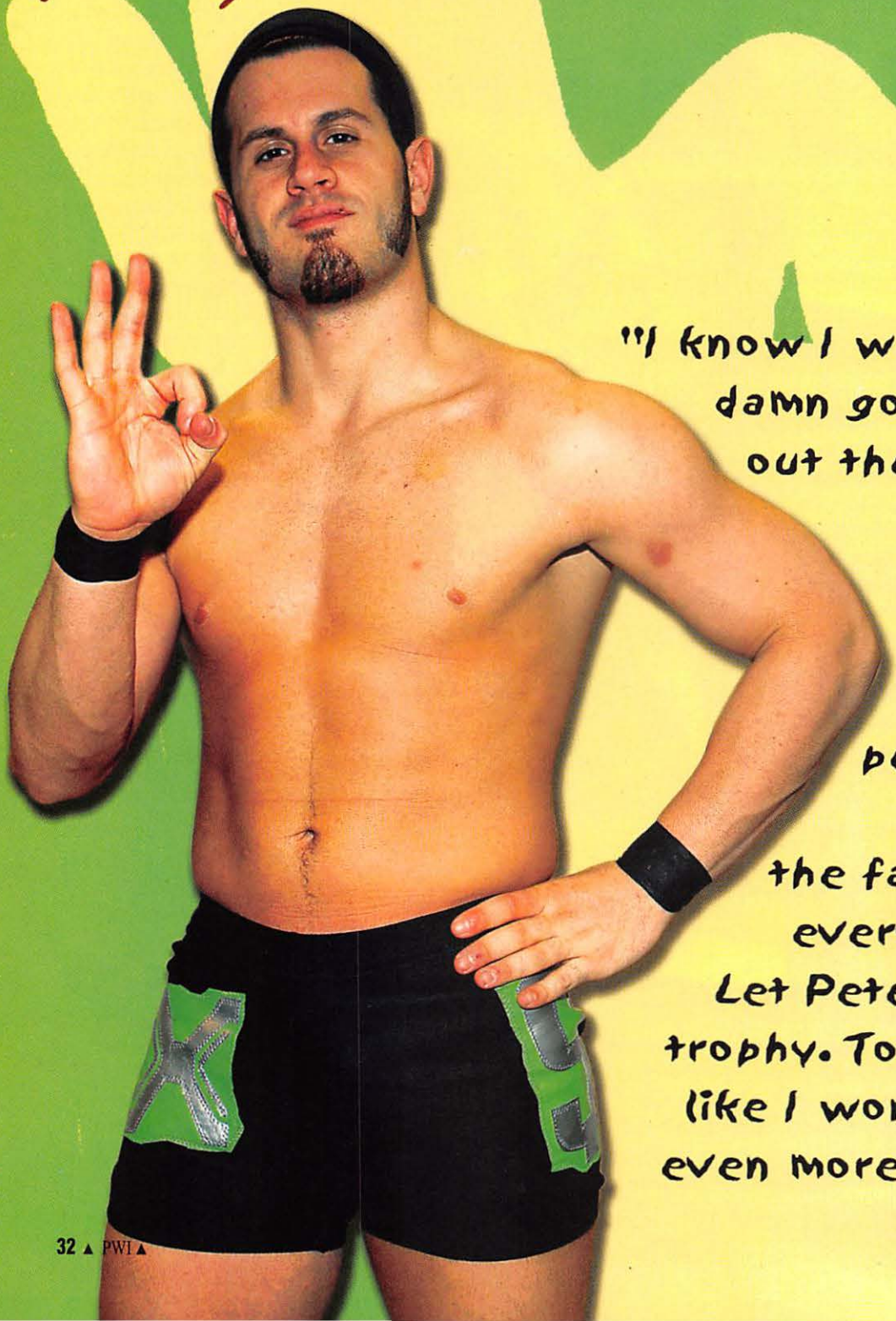
Good luck trying to figure out what Angle is trying to accomplish against Shawn Michaels here. Just rest assured that the man is so good at what he does that he is trying *something*.

9. Best recruiter WWE has ever had. Brock Lesnar. Shelton Benjamin. Charlie Haas. All three men starred in the amateur collegiate ranks, and all three men got into WWE after Angle had already paved the way. Angle's entrance into WWE and the success that he's achieved while wrestling in the promotion made professional wrestling, and WWE in particular, more desirable to a whole group of athletes who used to disdain the sport. In this manner, Angle's presence will be felt years upon years after his retirement.

10. Credibility factor. Professional wrestling has always had credibility issues, and probably always will. Angle's ascension in the sport, however, gives wrestling the most respectable spokesperson it has ever had. It's easy for mainstream media outlets to brush off an always-in-character Hulk Hogan, but it's pretty darn difficult for them to do so to an Olympic gold medalist. When Angle walks into a room, he commands respect like no other wrestler in the sport's history. His words carry weight, and a lot of it. □

SUPER 8's ALEX

"Petey Williams Won The Trophy"



"I know I wrestled two damn good matches out there tonight. I put it all on the line. I'm happy with my performance, and I think the fans enjoyed everything, too. Let Petey have the trophy. Tonight, I felt like I won something even more important."

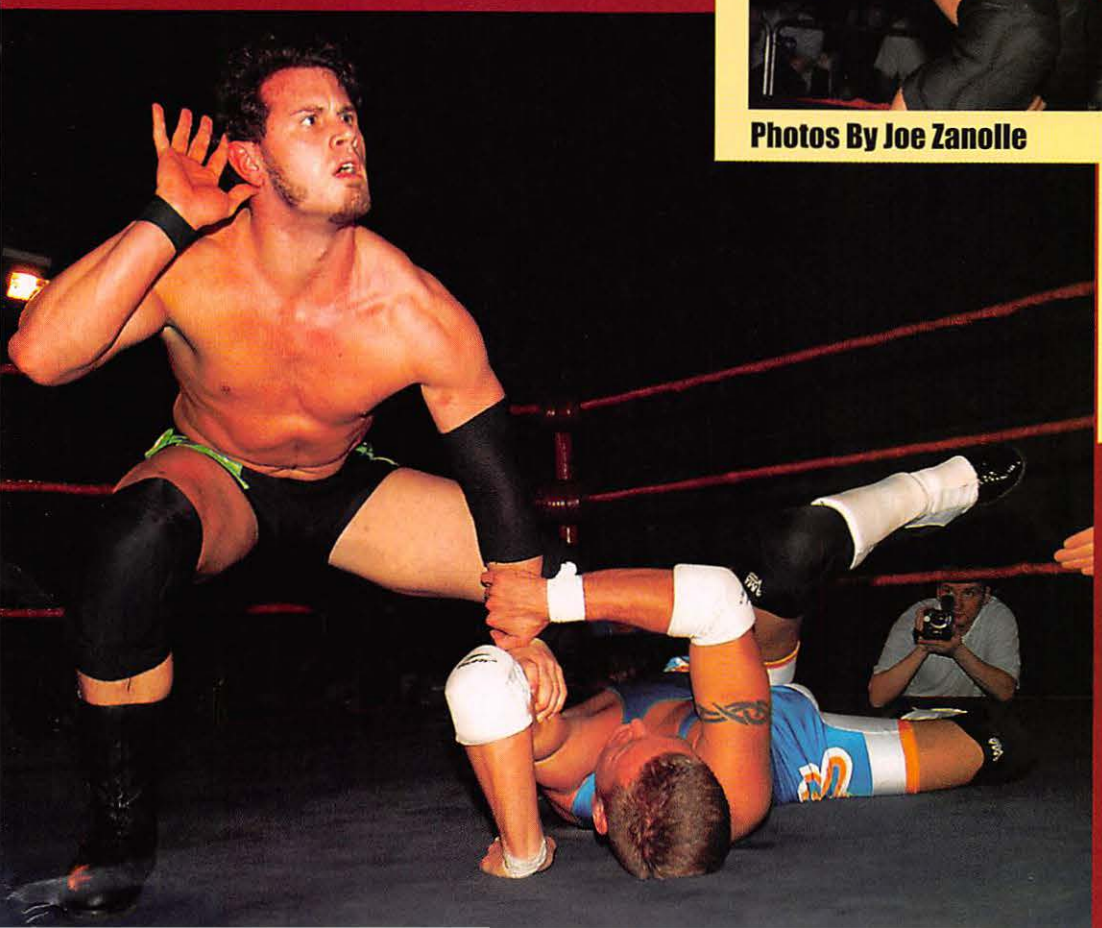
SHELLEY: *But I Won The Crowd"*

By Dan Murphy

THE CROWD HAD filtered out of the Greater Newark Boys' and Girls' Club. The ring had been disassembled, the giant ECWA-Tron video screen taken down. Petey Williams, the winner of the 2005 Super 8 Tournament, was out with trainer Scott D'Amore and several other tournament participants at a local restaurant, grabbing a late night bite to eat and maybe a few celebratory cocktails.

Alex Shelley wasn't with them. In fact, he was among the last wrestlers to leave the venue, spending more than an hour backstage, stretching, meditating, thinking, analyzing, speculating. And smiling.

Photos By Joe Zanolle



Shelley was hoping he could suplex his way to victory over Petey Williams in the Super 8 semifinals and then claim victory in the finals. It wasn't to be. By the end of the night, though, he was a lot more upbeat than he anticipated.

It was in the quarterfinals against Andrew Ryker when Shelley first sensed that he was winning over his share of fans in the building. Sure, some were taunting him, but a lot of them were impressed by what they were seeing.

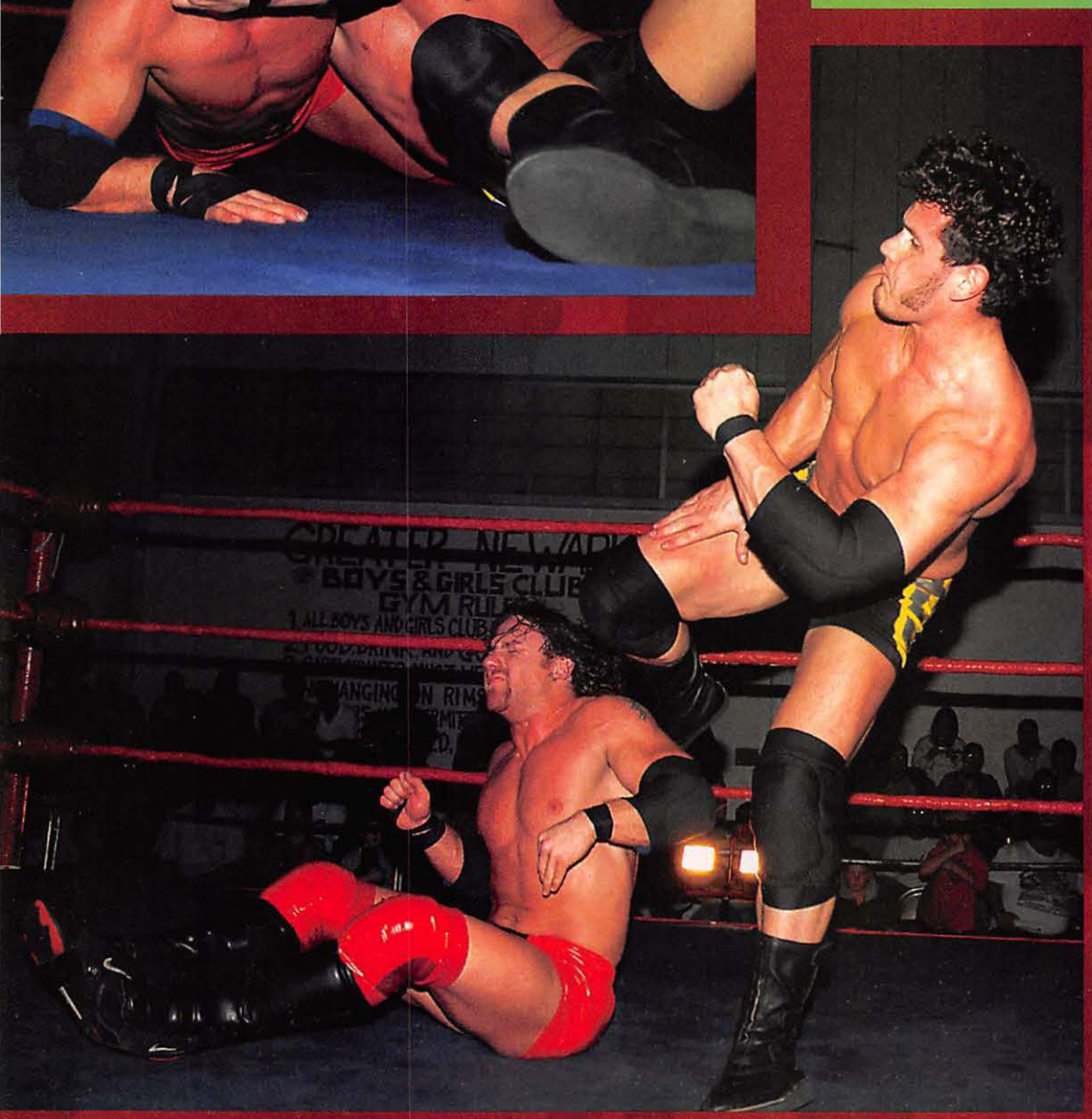
"You know something," Shelley said to no one in particular, though the reporter's ears perked up right away. "Petey Williams won the trophy tonight, but I won the crowd."

It would be hard to argue with that assessment. In a tournament that featured fewer big name stars than most previous years, Shelley got the star treatment from the capacity crowd, which recognized him from his high-profile stints in TNA and Ring of Honor, as well as appearances in more than two dozen smaller promotions.

Considering Shelley was facing local ECWA favorite Andrew Ryker in the first round of the tournament, he seemed destined to play the bad guy role, especially since he wrestled an aggressive style, popping Ryker with stiff dropkicks and tearing into Ryker's left arm like a pit bull. But after a few minutes, it was apparent that the crowd was split down the middle, with Shelley's fans getting louder and louder as the match wore on.

Shelley put on a showcase of technical know-how, working Ryker's arm with a rolling hammerlock into a Fujiwara armbar and torturing the Baltimore native with a variety of submission locks. He also played to the crowd, covering his ears when fans taunted him with the "Baby Bear" nickname he was saddled with in TNA. With his combination of intensity, showmanship, and technical ability (which he glibly describes as "British Lucharesu"), Shelley came off as a genuine superstar on the rise. By the time he made Ryker submit to a variation of the Crippler crossface, fans were solidly behind the Generation Next star.

It just so happens that that Generation Next ROH faction is headed up by ROH champion Austin Aries, who competed in the



Shelley has a strange term for his style, one that involves some fine mat grappling (top) and quite a few high-impact moves (above). His performance in the Super 8—although he was ousted in the second round—could do a lot for his career.

2004 Super 8, losing to Christopher Daniels in the finals. Last year, Aries was the buzz of the tournament, a surprise contender who didn't win but came out of it with the most momentum.

In 2003, Paul London hoisted the championship trophy, but Chance Beckett was the wrestler everyone was talking about after he ripped up his chin and gutted his way into the tournament finals, seemingly on sheer willpower alone. That performance earned Beckett bookings in Ring of Honor. Though he has not had the post-Super 8 success of Aries, his performance was the high point of his career to date.

In 2002, A.J. Styles was the "it" wrestler of the Super 8. He lost to Donovan Morgan in the finals, but he has gone on to enjoy two NWA title reigns and four TNA X title reigns as well as the unofficial status as TNA's brightest star. The year before that, American Dragon had his coming-out party, even though Low-Ki won the tourney.

The former "Baby Bear" of TNA is hoping that he'll have the kind of success past "it" performers in the Super 8 such as American Dragon, A.J. Styles, and Austin Aries have had. The talent and personality seem to be there.

Clearly, it's not always whether you win or lose, but how you compete that matters in the Super 8.

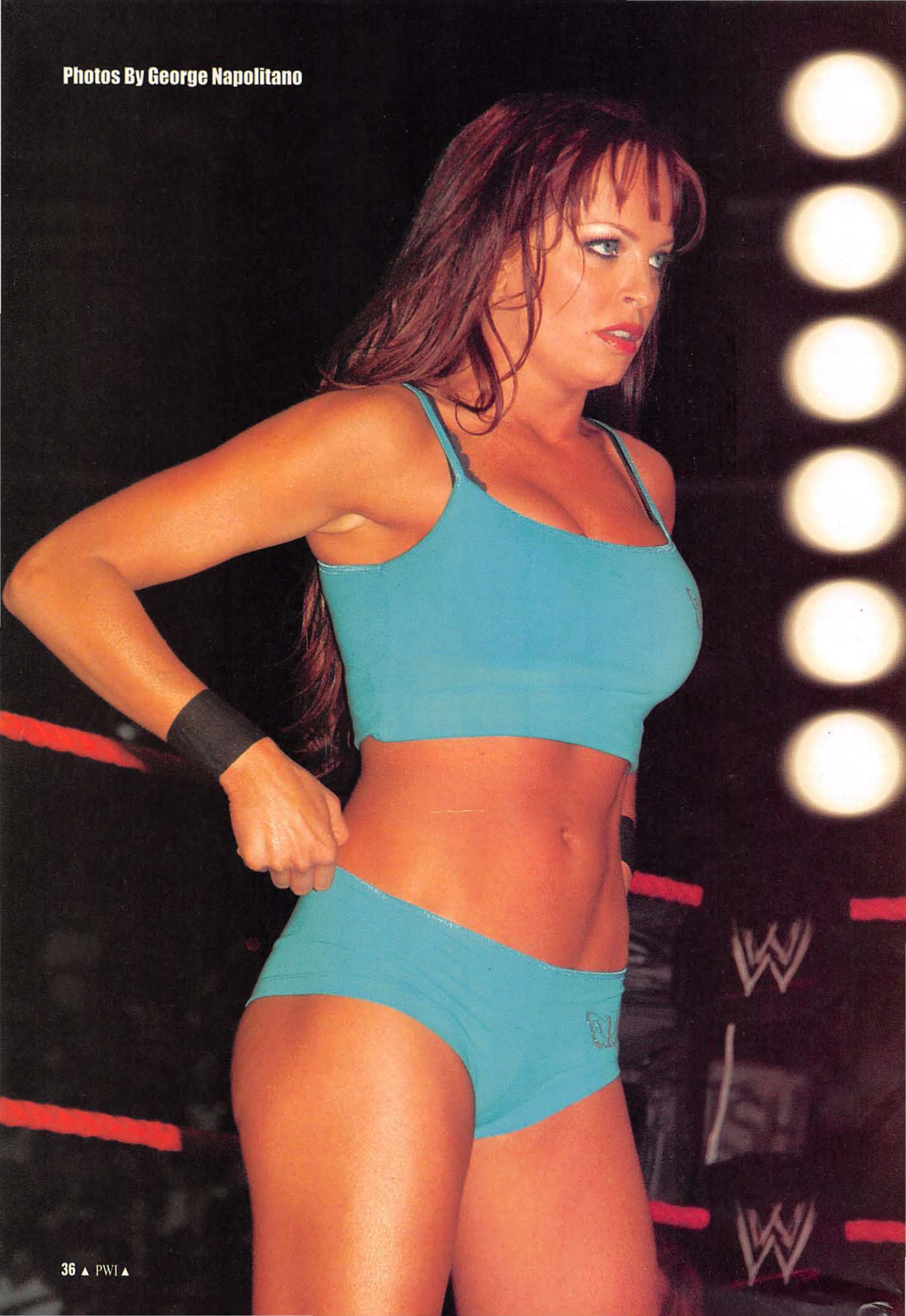
Shelley's bid for the tournament trophy collapsed in the semifinals, in which he faced Williams. Williams also had a vocal fan following, prompting a loud alternating chorus of "Let's go Petey!" and "Let's go Shelley!" from a divided audience as Williams and Shelley faced off. It was easy to see that Williams and Shelley were the most experienced and well-traveled competitors in the field of eight—and that they shared common training—as they matched one another move-for-move in a wild back-and-forth bout. Shelley successfully countered Williams' attempts to hit his vaunted Canadian destroyer piledriver, but was unable to get Williams to submit to the crossface or secure the pinfall. Finally, after more than 20 minutes of intense action, Williams hooked Shelley with a desperation cradle and scored the three-count, eliminating him from the tournament.

A short time later, Williams would hit the Canadian destroyer on Puma to win the tournament and become the eighth man in the nine-year history of the Super 8 to hold the trophy aloft (Daniels won the tournament in both 2000 and 2004). As tradition dictates, Shelley joined the rest of the Super 8 field in congratulating Williams in the ring. He expected to feel disappointed, knowing if he had done just a little more, he could have been the man holding that coveted trophy. For some reason, all he felt was satisfaction.

"I know I wrestled two damn good matches out there tonight," Shelley said, finally starting the task of gathering his gear and heading off to catch a late flight back to Detroit. "I put it all on the line. I'm happy with my performance, and I think the fans enjoyed everything, too. Let Petey have the trophy. Tonight, I felt like I won something even more important."

Shelley won respect. And if the performances of Aries, Styles, and American Dragon are any indication, he has every reason to see good things on the horizon. □

Photos By George Napolitano



A HEMME WITHOUT THE POWER

Is WWE Running This Diva Into The Ground?

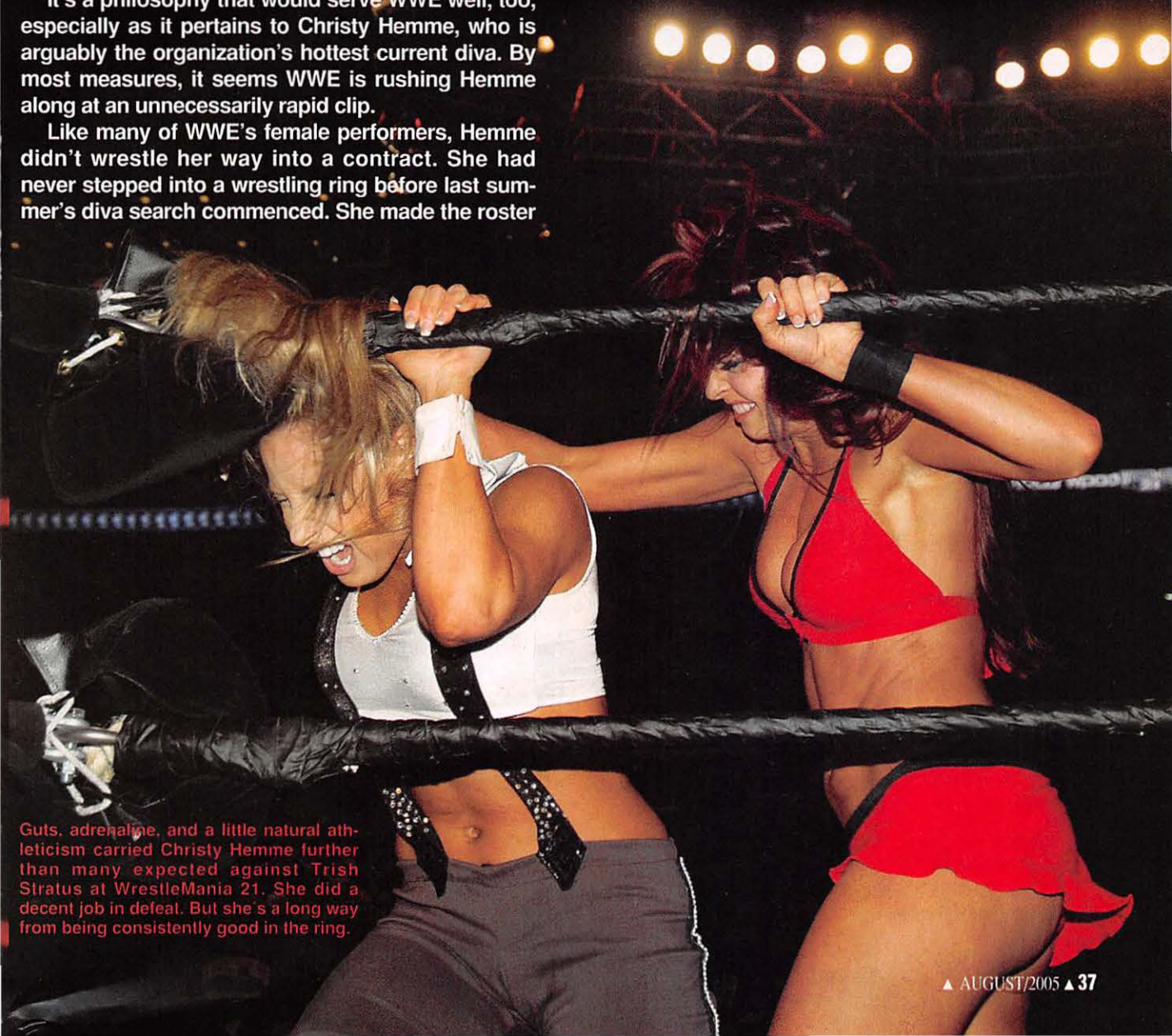
By Frank Krewda

ONE OF THE Fuente family's most common marketing slogans says, "We will never rush the hands of time." The inference is that the longer the Fuentes' cigars are aged, the better their quality will be when consumers finally smoke them. Judging from the family's prominence in the cigar industry, that philosophy has served it well.

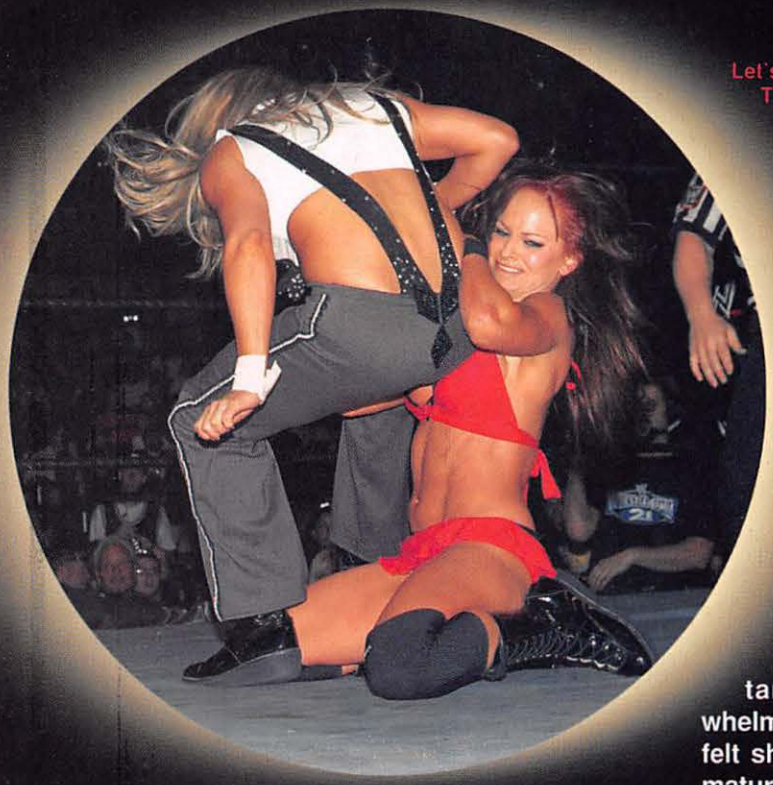
It's a philosophy that would serve WWE well, too, especially as it pertains to Christy Hemme, who is arguably the organization's hottest current diva. By most measures, it seems WWE is rushing Hemme along at an unnecessarily rapid clip.

Like many of WWE's female performers, Hemme didn't wrestle her way into a contract. She had never stepped into a wrestling ring before last summer's diva search commenced. She made the roster by virtue of her looks, personality, and spunk (and possibly her willingness to bounce around the ring in skimpy outfits).

But unlike many of the WWE women, she has been blindly thrust into a prominent in-ring role without the benefit of a learning curve. And whether or not Hemme or WWE or anyone else cares to



Guts, adrenaline, and a little natural athleticism carried Christy Hemme further than many expected against Trish Stratus at WrestleMania 21. She did a decent job in defeat. But she's a long way from being consistently good in the ring.



Let's give Christy a ton of credit for trying so hard against Trish with only a few weeks of training. If WWE expects her to develop and improve very quickly as a wrestler, it might be setting her up to burn out very quickly.

admit it, the way Hemme is being handled right now could be the perfect way to burn her out before she reaches her potential, whatever that might be.

Recent WWE history supports this theory. Only Trish Stratus, ironically Hemme's arch-rival at the moment, made the leap from T & A attraction to highly credible wrestler, and that was a slow evolution that took years, not weeks or even months.

"That's the one thing about little miss Christy that really ticks me off," Stratus said. "I busted my butt for years trying to get to the point where I could win the women's title and be a damn good champion, and along comes this redheaded bimbo, who got an opportunity handed to her on a platter. Then she cons Lita into trying to screw me out of the title. She doesn't deserve the title I have here. I do. Me and only me. She didn't work for it. I did."

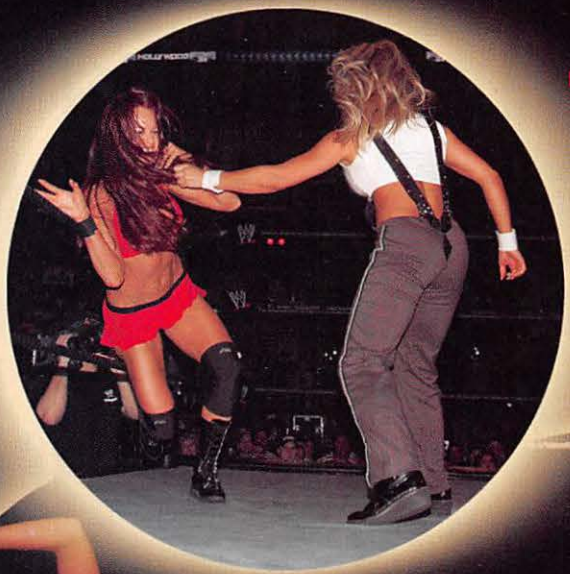
Stacy Keibler, Torrie Wilson, and Dawn Marie—eye-popping beauties, all three—have tried and failed to establish credibility as in-ring performers. Sure, they all deserve their places in WWE programming. But nobody points to any one of those three and says, "My, how she's improved her wrestling skills." And until wrestling fans can do that, a valid argument can be made that none of them has reached her full potential.

Even newcomers such as Gail Kim, who probably possesses more pure wrestling skill than Hemme ever will and had a fair amount of experience on the independent circuit to her credit when she arrived in WWE, struggled in her role as women's champ. After winning the title in her TV debut, Kim wilted under the strain of defending her belt against a new opponent in a new city, night after night.

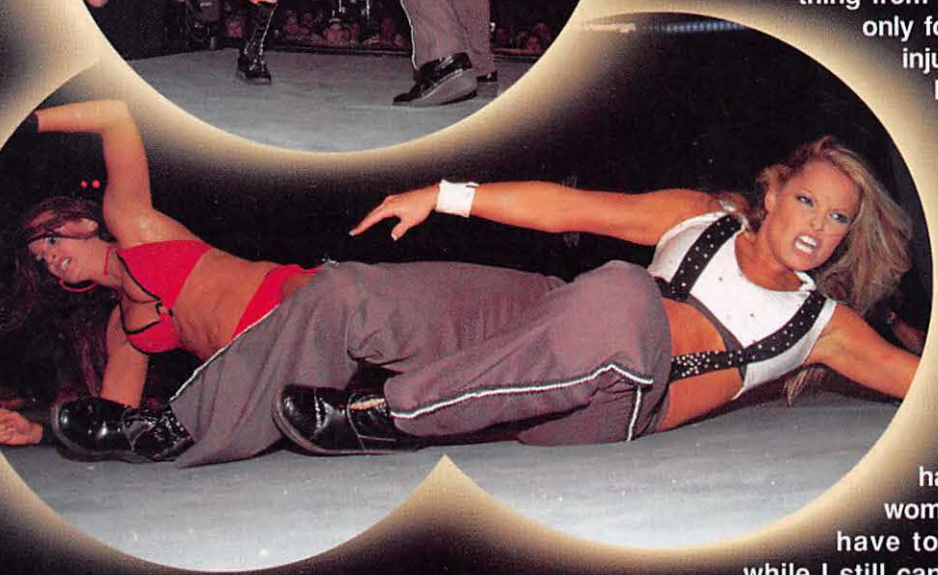
The pressure of being continually hunted, which forced her to be at the top of her game each time she stepped into the ring, snowballed. Her performance suffered and she soon lost the title. With no opportunity to develop resistance to the rigors, Kim was quickly overwhelmed and fell just as quickly as she rose. Some felt she never completely recovered from the premature push and subsequent setback. She was released from WWE last year.

Now it seems Hemme, who, with Lita's help, gave Stratus a respectable challenge for the title at WrestleMania 21, is in danger of becoming another hapless victim of that nefarious "too much, too soon" syndrome. And the worst part of it all is that it doesn't have to happen.

"It's almost a cinch that Lita and Victoria will rekindle their desire for the women's title, and when they do, Hemme will then become the proverbial bull in the ring that'll be facing threats from all sides. The bruises she suffers at Stratus' hands will have barely healed when she'll be required to face Victoria. Then the wounds she suffers in those matches will still be fresh when she'll have to battle Lita."



Hemme probably didn't realize how much it hurts to wrestle even one grueling singles match until she actually locked up with Trish on April 3 (left and below left). Stratus could tell her how much pain—physical, mental, and emotional—goes into becoming a good wrestler.



Christy throws her hands in the air and says, "I can't take this anymore!"

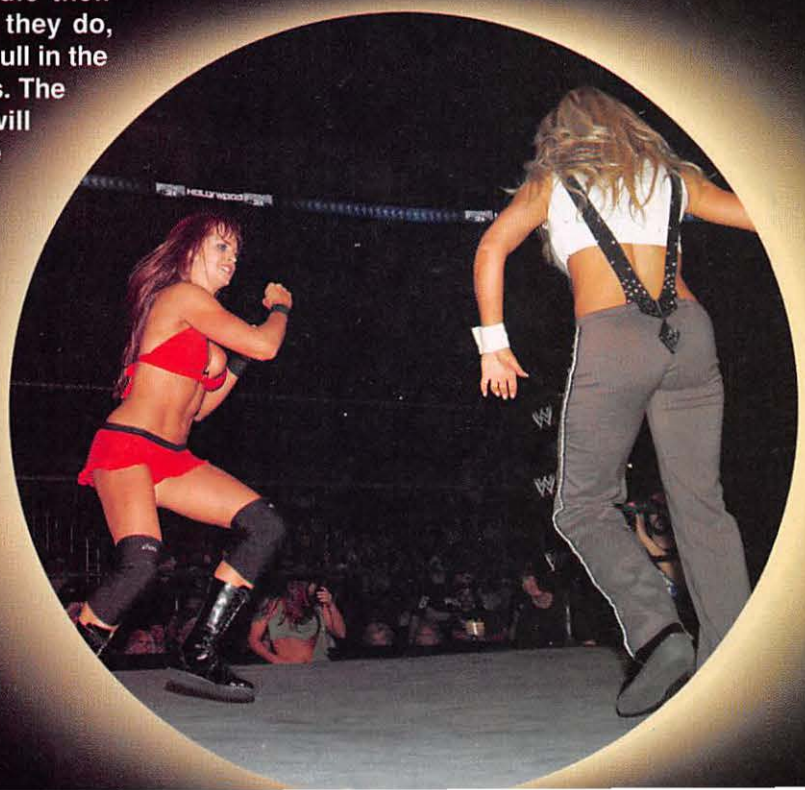
To WWE's credit, Hemme's been seen in more sketches and fewer matches as of late. So maybe Vince McMahon has wised up and decided to protect his investment. Maybe he has learned something from the Gail Kim experiment. With only four divas—Stratus, Victoria, an injured Lita, and Hemme—currently making up the roster of female wrestlers, her schedule does afford a certain amount of rest. But the lure of fame and the ever-closing window in which to achieve it might entice Hemme to step up her efforts rather than commit herself judiciously.

"No way, I can't afford to sit back and relax now. I still have a chance to win the WWE women's title from Trish Stratus. I have to maximize this opportunity while I still can," Hemme told *PWI*. "I might never be in the spotlight again after this run. There are no guarantees."

From glorified beauty pageant winner to WWE titleholder? The impossible could still happen, but maybe it would be best if it didn't. Not anytime soon anyway. □

Hemme isn't contractually bound to wrestle. Sure, she's probably required to appear in a certain number of *Raw* segments and perform in some capacity at a certain number of house shows. But she's not required to roll around the ring with Trish Stratus every night. It's almost a cinch that Lita and Victoria will rekindle their desire for the women's title, and when they do, Hemme will then become the proverbial bull in the ring that'll be facing threats from all sides. The bruises she suffers at Stratus' hands will have barely healed when she'll be required to face Victoria. Then the wounds she suffers in those matches will still be fresh when she'll have to battle Lita.

It's a vicious cycle even the most hardened females can hardly negotiate, much less a *Playboy* centerfold trying to learn how to wrestle on the fly. The more she wrestles, the better she'll get, but how fast, and at what cost? How long before



If Christy could be given time to develop slowly, away from the spotlight, WWE might have another Stratus-like success story about which it could brag. How likely is it that she would be given that kind of time, however?

HOGAN, PIPER LEAD SEVEN INTO WWE HALL

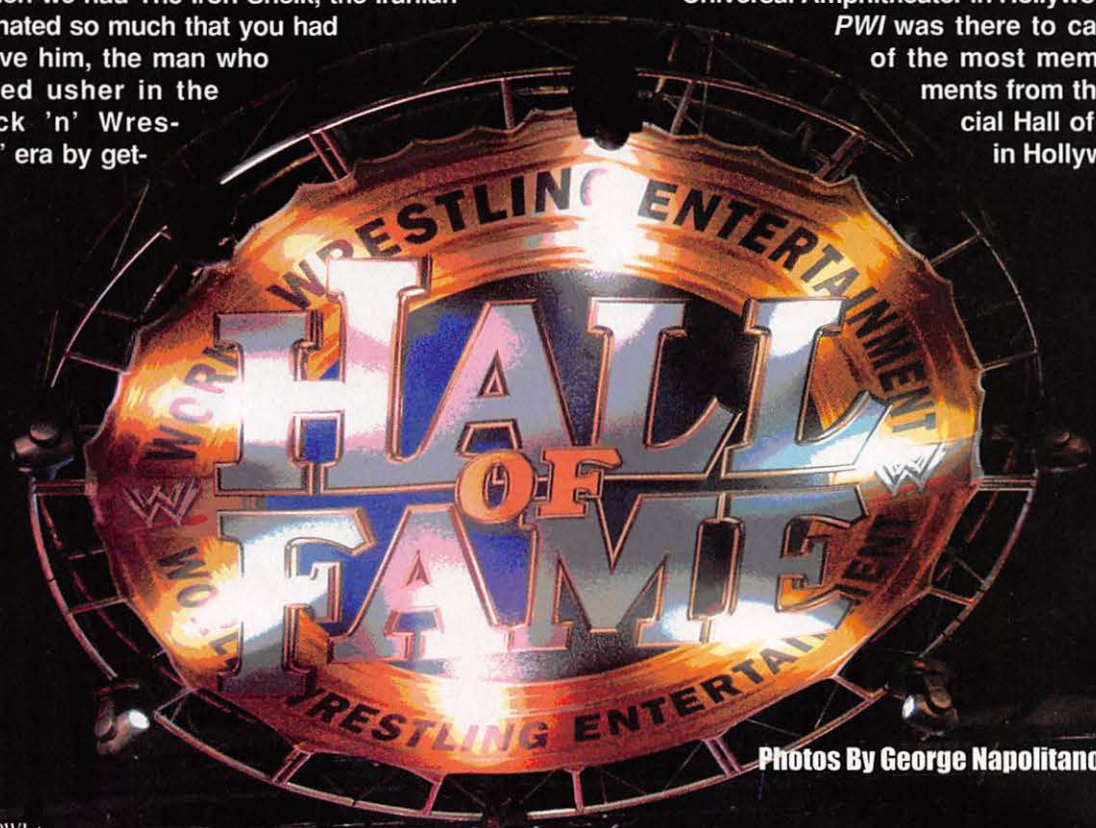
Exclusive Photos Of This Historic Evening!

THEY COULD HAVE called it a 20-year "Rock 'n' Wrestling" Reunion. All seven members of WWE's Hall of Fame class of 2005 were major players for the company during that particular golden era of the mid-1980s. From Nikolai Volkoff's singing of the Russian national anthem ... to the arrogance and in-ring brilliance of "Mr. Wonderful" Paul Orndorff ... to "Cowboy" Bob Orton Jr.'s infamous cast. (Did he have that thing surgically attached to his arm?)

Then we had The Iron Sheik, the Iranian you hated so much that you had to love him, the man who helped usher in the "Rock 'n' Wrestling" era by getting squashed by Hulk Hogan in perhaps the most famous match in WWE history. And Jimmy Hart, the manager who was so loud and annoying for so many years but so humbled by this honor.

And what else need be said about Roddy Piper and Hulk Hogan, the two men who epitomized the phrase "Rock 'n' Wrestling," two long-time enemies who can now look back upon their bitter rivalry together with smiles on their faces. The ovation for the "Hulkster" might still reverberating around the Universal Amphitheater in Hollywood today.

PWI was there to capture some of the most memorable moments from that very special Hall of Fame night in Hollywood.

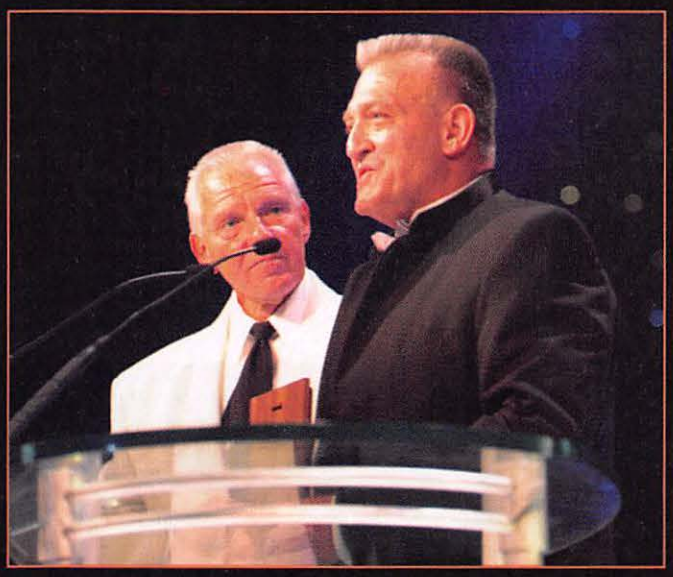


Photos By George Napolitano & Mike Lano

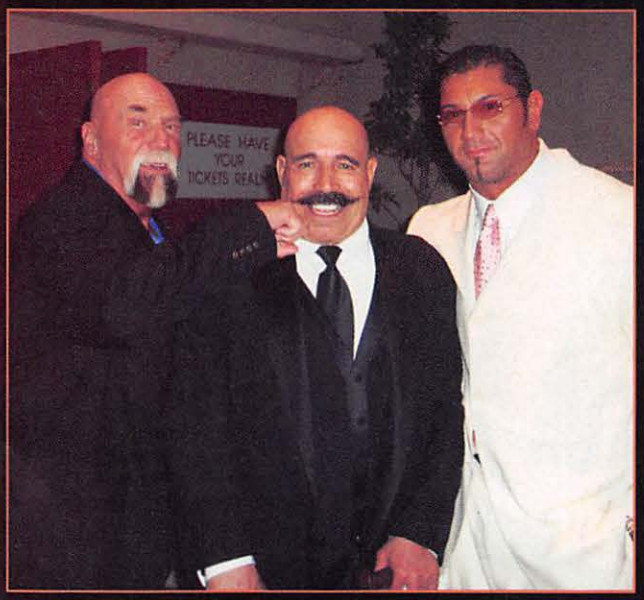
This photo gives you an idea of what the stage looked like before any of the inductees took to it.

There's a powerful threesome (in more ways than one) for you: Sylvester Stallone (Hulk Hogan's co-star in *Rocky III* and the man who inducted the "Hulkster" into the Hall), Hogan himself, and Vince McMahon.

It was only fitting that Jerry Lawler inducted Jimmy Hart. The two of them made a lot of wrestling history together in Memphis—and weren't always on the same side.



Many people forget that Paul Orndorff was one of Hulk Hogan's toughest opponents ever. "Mr. Wonderful's" one-time manager, Bobby Heenan, probably doesn't.



Superstar Graham was inducted into the Hall of Fame in 2004. The Iron Sheik was in this year's class. Batista should get his day someday.

The McMahon family wasn't going to miss the Hall of Fame proceedings. And they cheered just as enthusiastically as anyone.

the business page

By Harry Burkett

Good, good CD ... The time is now for a bad, bad man—at least that's what some rap and hip-hop critics are saying about John Cena and his debut CD, *You Can't See Me,* which includes tracks such as "The Time Is Now" and "Bad, Bad Man." Columbia Records released the CD on May 10.

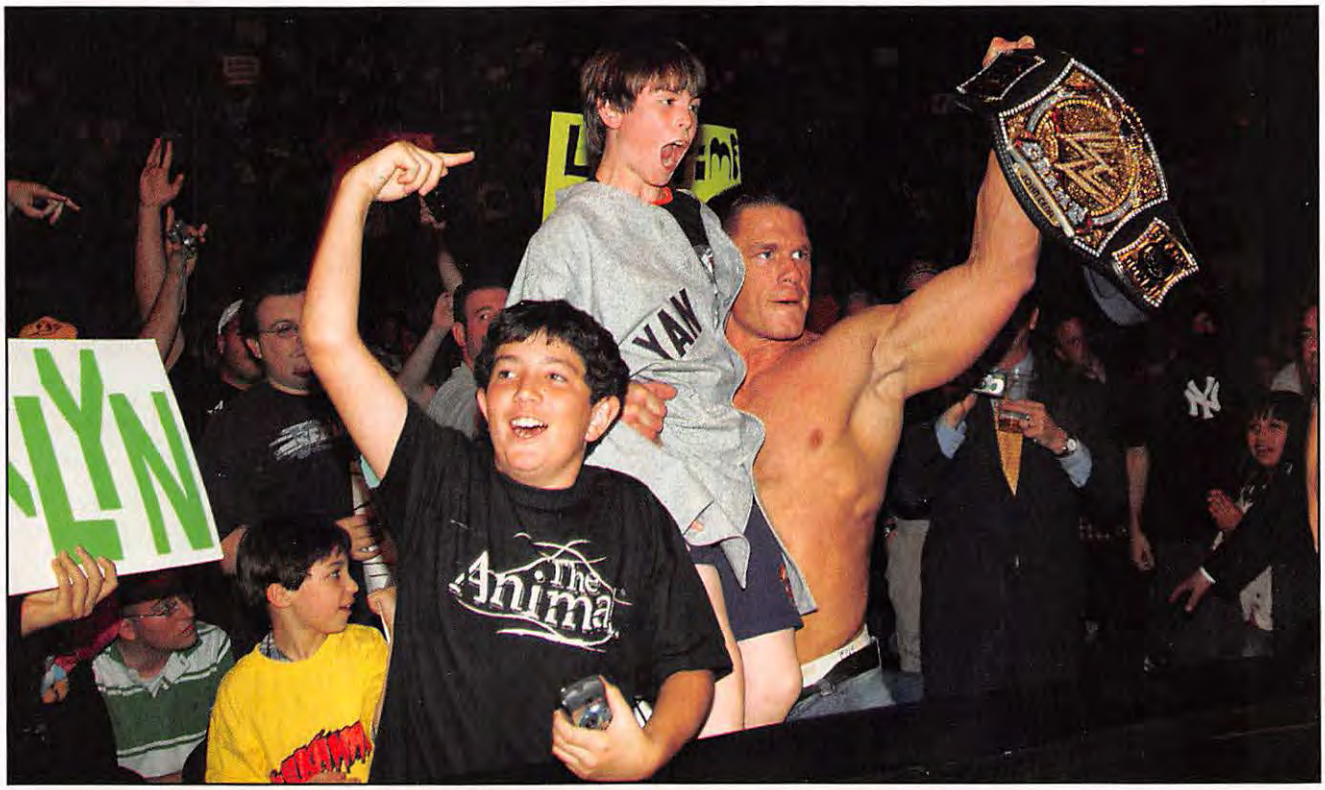
Cena's music video for "Bad, Bad Man," in particular, is bound to get exposure on WWE programming and MTV. "The whole concept of the video is that Gary Coleman finds out the '80s [have been] captured," Cena said in an interview on MTV's Web site. "Since he is the '80s staple, he's worried about it. He calls in the Chain Gang to save the '80s ... By the time we get to the hideout to save the '80s, [Coleman] just wants to capture us and destroy the '80s so he could get on with his life and doesn't have to hear 'Whatchooo talkin' 'bout, Willis."

In the video, the Chain Gang transforms into *The A-Team* in their effort to "save" the '80s. With a big cigar clamped between his teeth, Cena does his best impersonation of Col. Hannibal Smith (played by George Peppard in the television series) as he leads his gang into a high-speed chase. Said Cena: "We watched so much *A-Team,* we tried to pick out the cheesy gimmicks they used in every show and put 'em all in four minutes."

Despite the one-dimensional nature of that video, the depth and seriousness of *You Can't See Me* has surprised many critics.

Steve Juon of rapreviews.com exclaimed, "The beat is right, the crew is right, and the skeptics can stop hating Cena now because the lyrics are tight ... While Cena, WWE, and Columbia Records may all agree that there's a lot of crossover potential, thanks to his incredible popularity as a wrestler, they're not making the mistake of having Cena write and record songs dissing his chief rival, John Bradshaw Layfield, on this album. Cena can challenge JBL at live shows and TV tapings with freestyles, and it works in that venue. In this venue, Cena is all about hip-hop, and his only competitors are fellow MCs who think they can knock him off easily."

That sucking sound is a power vacuum ... Dusty Rhodes once claimed to be a "tower of power, too sweet to be sour," but the tower now finds himself out of power in TNA. Similarly, WWE developmental official Jim Cornette was temporarily suspended from his duties with Ohio



John Cena's Chain Gang is already pretty large and passionate. It figures to get a whole lot bigger and stronger if his first hip-hop CD, *You Can't See Me,* does particularly well.

Promoter/broadcaster Jim Cornette was given what appeared to be a much-needed break from his role in Ohio Valley Wrestling this spring ... whether he wanted it or not.

Valley Wrestling. Here's the inside scoop on what happened to two of wrestling's most colorful behind-the-scenes players.

Let's start with the Dusty Rhodes story. Although Rhodes had served as head booker for only a few months, TNA President Dixie Carter was reportedly disappointed with pay-per-view buy rates and *Impact's* television ratings during his tenure. Carter decided to personally head a booking committee that would also consist of Scott D'Amore, Jeremy Borash, and Bill Banks. She invited Rhodes to be a member of the committee, but "The American Dream" opted to resign altogether. There were no hard feelings, however, and Rhodes agreed to retain his on-air role as TNA's director of authority.

Over in Ohio Valley, WWE suspended Jim Cornette for 30 days, citing unprofessional behavior. According to sources, Cornette was infuriated that Kevin Fertig (formerly known as Mordecai) wore a baseball cap backward when he teamed with Daniel Puder against Kenzo Suzuki and Ken Doane during an OVW TV taping. Feeling it was disrespectful and unprofessional, Cornette reportedly lashed out at Fertig backstage. Apparently, Cornette's outbursts have become common in OVW, and WWE took action by suspending him and thus allowing him to get away from it all for a while. OVW owner Danny Davis, WWE executive Tommy Dreamer, and trainers Lance Storm and Al Snow were slated to help put together OVW's weekly television shows during Cornette's absence, and Snow was expected to temporarily replace him as a broadcaster.

The great Kreski dies ... His name is unknown to millions of fans who enjoyed his work every week, but most insiders will remember Chris Kreski as one of the best writers in the history of wrestling television. Kreski died of cancer on May 9 at the age of 42.

Kreski replaced Vince Russo and Ed Ferrara after the WWF's veteran writing duo suddenly jumped to WCW in 1999. As a former writer for *The Martin Short Show* with no experience in the wrestling industry, Kreski was expected to have a tough time matching wits against Russo and Ferrara, the creative team that had helped the WWF take the lead in the Monday night wars.

While Kreski may have been a comedy writer, he also had a profound respect for wrestling that enabled him to produce *Raw* and *Smackdown* shows that were clever and witty, not silly. Golden nuggets of the Kreski era included the rise of Kurt Angle as an Olympic jerk, the obnoxiousness of Edge and Christian, the antics of Pat Patterson and Gerald Brisco, and, yes, Big Bossman hitching up The Big Show's father's casket to a tow truck. As it turned out, *Raw's* ratings rose under Kreski, and WCW met its demise.

Stephanie McMahon became head writer in 2002 after Kreski resigned, citing burnout and better career opportunities. Kreski's other credits included *Beavis & Butthead, Remote Control, The Daily Show With Jon Stewart,* the 2002 MTV Movie Awards, and the 2003 NFL Kickoff Concert.

WWE Stockwatch

(For the period of March 16 to April 30, 2005)

45-Day High: 12.58 on March 17
45-Day Low: 10.45 on April 29
52-Week High: 13.90 on May 3, 2004
52-Week Low: 10.45 on April 29, 2005

WrestleMania 21, held on April 3, was the most profitable WWE pay-per-view of all-time—earning 940,000 buys at last count, a 14 percent increase over previous record holder WrestleMania XX. But WWE stock tumbled to a 52-week low, down to 10.45, by the end of the month. What gives? Investors realize 'Mania is a once-a-year phenomenon, and WWE's struggles with talent and creative direction are now common knowledge.

"WWE needs to get itself on a growth track again," wrote investment commentator Steven Mallas for the Motley Fool Web site. "The market is certainly going to be skeptical of a philosophy that goes something like, 'WrestleMania 21 is up over WrestleMania XX, we need to get on board.' Nope, not that easy."

Investors are still analyzing WWE's recent three-year deal with NBC Universal. According to the contract, *Raw* will leave Spike TV for the USA Network and Telemundo in October. Also, there will be an additional weekly one-hour program on the USA Network, at least one special per year on USA, and two 90-minute specials on NBC, patterned after the *Saturday Night's Main Event* shows of the 1980s. The downside is that WWE will lose about $13-million in net income in fiscal year 2006 because USA will pay a flat annual fee for the programming and, unlike Spike TV, will keep all advertising revenues.

TV breakdown

RAW (Spike TV)

April 4: 4.3
April 11: 4.1
April 18: 3.9
April 25: 4.0
May 2: 4.1
May 9: 3.8

Analysis: WrestleMania 21 gave *Raw* a big bounce on April 4, helping WWE's flagship program score a 4.3 overall rating—only two-tenths of a point shy of the rating for the *Raw* featuring 2004's talent draft. There were a few jitters by April 18, when *Raw* dropped nearly a half-point to 3.9, but the show rebounded on April 25 and May 2. *Raw's* special U.K. edition, featuring World champion Batista vs. Christian, earned a 4.0. It would be hard to call it a Backlash bounce, but the May 2 broadcast of *Raw* averaged a healthy 4.1 in both the first and second hours, indicating that viewers are tuning in to the show early and liking what they see. The most disheartening trend of the past two years has been the tendency of viewers to sample the first hour, begin to tune out during the second, and possibly catch the overrun segment. Only time will tell whether Raw champ Batista has the ability to sustain the show's momentum.

SMACKDOWN (UPN)

March 31: 3.6
April 7: 3.4
April 14: 3.4
April 21: 3.3
April 28: 3.2
May 6: 3.0

Analysis: *Smackdown* scored a 3.6 overall rating for the final show before WrestleMania 21, with much of the program revolving around the feud between then-World champ John Bradshaw Layfield and John Cena, as well as Akebono vs. The Big Show, among other rivalries. Although Cena-Layfield II was slated for Judgment Day in late-May, the most interesting fallout from WrestleMania was the breakup of Eddie Guerrero and Rey Misterio Jr. Tension mounted after Misterio's clean pinfall win over Guerrero at 'Mania, and a lack of teamwork caused them to lose the Smackdown tag team title to M-N-M. But neither that unfolding soap opera nor Cena's run as Smackdown champ has prevented the program from slipping back into the low-3s. To put that into perspective, 4.7 was a routine number for *Smackdown* during the Austin-Rock-Helmsley heyday of five years ago.

VELOCITY (Spike TV)

April 2: no show
April 9: no show
April 16: 0.4
April 23: 0.5
April 30: 0.5
May 7: 0.4

Analysis: Spike TV executives probably didn't miss *Velocity* during its two-week hiatus. During WrestleMania weekend, the WWE Hall of Fame ceremonies took over *Velocity's* time slot on April 2, featuring the memorable inductions of Roddy Piper and Hulk Hogan. The show earned an impressive 1.3—a record for the 11 p.m. time slot on Spike TV. But not so fast. The UFC's Ultimate Fighter special scored a 1.9 in the same time slot a week later. Did Steve Romero keep his day job in Kansas City?

THE WWE EXPERIENCE (Spike TV)

April 3: no show
April 10: 0.8
April 17: 0.4
April 24: 0.6
May 1: 0.6
May 8: 0.4

Analysis: What happened on April 10? Considering a repeat of the WWE Hall of Fame ceremonies scored a 0.6 in the same time slot a week earlier, perhaps viewers were hoping for part two of a Hall of Fame induction special. Nevertheless, there has been a slight surge in *Experience's* ratings since late-2004 (emphasis on the word "slight"). Todd Grisham and Ivory celebrated *Experience's* first anniversary on May 1, but will the cappuccino-hyped twosome survive WWE's jump to USA? Will *Experience* remain WWE's Raw-Smackdown hybrid show? It seems unlikely.

SUNDAY NIGHT HEAT (Spike TV)

April 3: 0.7
April 10: 0.9
April 17: 0.8
April 24: 0.8
May 1: 0.7
May 8: 0.7

Analysis: The April 3 edition of *Sunday Night Heat* aired at 6 p.m. Eastern time to make way for WrestleMania 21 one hour later. Interestingly, *Heat* mustered only a 0.7 on the most important day of the WWE calendar, the same number it earned as a lead-in for Backlash on May 1. The April 10 *Heat* was an especially hot show, with then-Raw tag champs William Regal and Tajiri defeating La Resistance and the team of The Hurricane and Rosey in a three-way elimination match. *Heat* has yet to reach the 1.0 mark in 2005.

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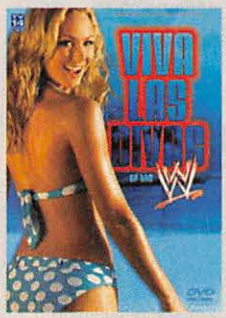

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the steel cage

By Jason Langin

I'M NOT A big TV watcher, and when I do watch, it is hardly ever PBS. However, there are rare occasions when I do find myself enjoying a musical broadcast or holiday show on public television. And it always seems like right in the middle of one of these excellent programs, there is an interruption by a telethon looking to raise money to support the station. How annoying! I immediately turn off the program and pop in an old Royal Rumble tape.

A night at the ECWA's 2005 Super 8 Tournament turned out to be a wonderful night out for Jason Langin. It wasn't just thrilling matches like J.J. Perez vs. Puma that made it so. It reminded him again how great the indy wrestling experience can be.

But as I gleefully watch superstars from days of yore being tossed over the top rope, my mind goes back to that imploring soul from the PBS studio. I remember that the reason the station is asking for money is that it is a non-commercial station. I remember that this station exists not to make money, but for the greater good. I, and many others, take for granted that this station is funded by the "public" (hence the "P" in PBS). What if nobody decided to support the station? It could well be the last time anyone would see Big Bird, Clifford, or Jim Lehrer (in no particular order), and that would be quite sad.

In a way, independent wrestling organizations are the public broadcasting stations of professional wrestling. Allow me to elucidate this analogy.

I recently had the privilege of being a guest at the ninth annual Super 8 Tournament, a fabulous event hosted by the East Coast Wrestling Association in Delaware. You will read elsewhere in the *PWI* family of publications about the great wrestling action, so I won't really get into that aspect of the show. I entered the Boys' and Girls' Club in Newark, Delaware, excited about a special night, and I was not disappointed. Before the event, I had the chance to speak to all the competitors on the night's card. And it wasn't necessarily because I came with press credentials. Every wrestler who was participating that night was on hand before bell time signing autographs for fans.

Do you think you could ever walk into Madison Square Garden and be able to stroll up to Kurt Angle or Booker T? That's no sleight on the approachability of either superstar, but would WWE ever allow it?

Also on this night, I was pleased to look around and see so many kids in the audience. Parents brought their little ones, and all family members were offered a real treat. There were

no young women dressed scantily in the ring. No wrestlers were cursing on the microphone. Plus, there was a wicked $3 special for a hot dog, soda, and fries. There was nothing to be worried about at all. And there was a much-deserved rousing standing ovation from all in attendance by night's end.

If you've never been to an indy card, or just haven't been to one lately, you are really missing out on something special. My first indy card was one of my favorite nights as a wrestling fan, period. I was a high school sophomore, and a wrestling show was going to be held in my school's gymnasium! That was like telling me that pre-haircut Metallica was going to play at my block party.

So there I was, camped out by the dean's office when I found out tickets were being sold there. On the day of the event, I couldn't keep my mind on schoolwork. I ran down to the gym between classes to watch the ring crew set up the squared circle, hoping for a glimpse of *anyone* that was participating that night. For one thing, I didn't really *know* which wrestlers I would be seeing. That's part of the beauty of an indy card: You never know what's going to happen.

I got to sit ringside that night for the first time in my life. I watched in awe as superstars like Bam Bam Bigelow, Ivan Koloff, Jason the Terrible, and Big John Studd performed right in front of me. And they were using *our* locker room! Maybe "The Russian Bear" was storing his chains next to my gym shorts! How cool!

From that moment on, I tried to make it a point to attend as many local wrestling cards as I could. Why not? How much would you spend if you went to the movies? How much would you spend on a night out to dinner with friends? Taking in an indy wrestling card can be a very inexpensive night out, and odds are you won't ever forget the experience.

And if you love wrestling—I mean *really* love wrestling and what it stands for—you *have* to attend some indy cards. Think of your favorite indy wrestler as the announcer on the PBS telethon. He needs your support and is willing to give you all he has in order to get it. True wrestling fans need to show their support for these wrestlers (both the up-and-coming competitors and the stars who are past their primes) because they represent the alternative.

I just now turned off a WWE program in disgust. Why? Because a perfectly talented wrestler (Matt Morgan) was reduced to the role of menacing stutterer. And fans ate it up, laughing at the behemoth who struggled to speak. This is clearly not something with which I want to be associated. I have worked with young students who stutter, and the last thing they need to see is someone being publicly humiliated because of this problem. Shame on WWE!

Ivan Koloff was one of the headliners of the first independent card Langin ever took in. It happened to take place at his high school. He still remembers how excited he was about it.

So what is a wrestling fan to do? If I don't like what WWE is doing, where am I to get my wrestling fix? Well, I could make my way into New Jersey to see what's going on in the IWF (and see The Honky Tonk Man!). Or I could head west to York, Pennsylvania, for an SWO show (I heard there is going to be a no-DQ lumberjack match—sweet!) Most likely, I'll just head back to another great ECWA show. I have to see Japanese Pool Boy again. (*Who?* you ask curiously. You have to see for yourself!)

And that's just because these are federations local to me. Do some hunting around your area and you'll probably find an indy federation running a show not far from you. There's no doubt that wrestling has fallen on some hard times in recent years, but we make them even harder if we don't support alternatives to WWE. You might not know one wrestler when you walk into an indy show, but you will when you leave. And besides, doesn't even a bad night of wrestling beat a night anywhere else? □

win, lose, or draw

By Harry Burkett

WHY, OH WHY, couldn't The Beatles have done just one more tour before John Lennon's death in 1980? Or why couldn't the remaining Beatles have done at least one more concert before George Harrison died of cancer in 2001? A Paul McCartney-Ringo Starr duet just wouldn't create the same magic.

A few weeks before WrestleMania 21, then-WWE Raw champ Triple-H posed the same kind of question to Batista: Why shouldn't Batista have jumped brands and pursued John Bradshaw Layfield's Smackdown title? Evolution could have ruled WWE, with Triple-H as Raw champ and Batista as Smackdown champ. Triple-H compared it to the prospect of Arn Anderson holding the WWF World title at the same time Ric Flair held the WCW World championship in the 1980s. The Four Horsemen ruling all of wrestling? It would have been awesome.

Why didn't Bobby Eaton, Dennis Condrey, and Stan Lane form a three-man Midnight Express during their prime? Why didn't Hulk Hogan and Ric Flair ever have that dream match at WrestleMania? Why didn't Bob Backlund ever defend against a single scientific wrestler in Madison Square Garden during his first run as WWF champion?

Missed opportunities. Right now, there's a missed opportunity in TNA so glaring that it's blinding me. I'm referring to the ultimate union of the two most dominant groups of the late-1990s, the New World Order and DeGeneration X.

I recently told Dave Lenker about this missed opportunity, and he instantly gave me the name for the would-be supergroup: NWX. Cool, isn't it? I'm surprised Kevin Nash hasn't already thought of it. Why couldn't they, to use Nash's phrase, "get the band back together again" for the very first time? Isn't that a contradiction in terms? Not really. And, if you recall the roots of the NWO and DX, you know what I'm writing about.

Back in the early-1990s, a powerful clique formed behind the scenes in the WWF. The group consisted of Shawn Michaels, Kevin Nash (Diesel), and Scott Hall (Razor Ramon), with Triple-H, Sean Waltman (X-Pac), and Justin Credible (Aldo Montoya) toting luggage as junior members. They lived fast, partied hearty, and left a lot of girls in tears. But this clique became a formidable counterbalance against the power and influ-

Kevin Nash is probably still thinking that Jeff Jarrett's NWA title is within his grasp. It might be. Harry Burkett writes that "Big Sexy" ought to think about putting a certain band together—a rather big band.

ence of WWF World champion Bret Hart, the company's most popular star, and a few others. Often lobbying against Hart and his allies, Michaels, Nash, and Hall were rewarded with multiple WWF World heavyweight, World tag team, and Intercontinental title reigns among them. In fact, Michaels began calling his legions of fans "The Kliq," an inside joke among WWF insiders.

The inside joke became public knowledge when Nash, Hall, Michaels, and Helmsley participated in a notorious four-corner salute to each other and the fans at MSG just before The Outsiders left for WCW in 1996. They broke the longest-held taboo in wrestling, considering the four men had been fighting each other just a few minutes earlier. Nash and Hall continued breaking the rules in WCW, appearing under their real names and mocking the establishment. The Kliq gave birth to the New World Order.

The Kliq also gave birth to DeGeneration X, the WWF's answer to the NWO. Michaels, Helmsley, Chyna, and Rick Rude comprised the first incarnation of DX. When Michaels retired due to a back injury in 1998, Triple-H recruited Billy Gunn, Road Dogg, and X-Pac (who had also been in the NWO) as new members. Even at the height of the Monday night war, DX took special care to never ridicule the NWO. They mocked WCW. The NWO was on the same page. They mocked WCW, too.

Billy Gunn, Road Dogg, and X-Pac remain active today, more than a half-decade since DX's heyday. They're all competing in the same company, as The Outlaw, B.G. James, and Sean Waltman, respectively. Incredibly, they're not on the same team. They're wasting a golden opportunity by feuding with one another.

More incredibly, The Outlaw's feud with James and Waltman follows the appearances of Scott Hall and Kevin Nash, who joined NWA champion Jeff Jarrett and proclaimed themselves The Kings of Wrestling last December. Although Hall and Nash have faded from TNA since that time, with Hall suffering through a number of health problems and Nash continuing to struggle with injuries, I'm surprised the spirit of the NWO and DX hasn't inspired these guys—or the creative team, for that matter—to create one of the most-anticipated unions in wrestling history.

3 Live Kru—Konnan, Ron Killings, and B.G. James—are still a very popular, powerful, and talented clique in TNA. Burkett wouldn't mind seeing them pool their skills and charisma with those of Nash, perhaps Scott Hall, The Outlaw, and Sean Waltman. The NWX perhaps?

Note that I do not use the word *re*union. It's not a reunion, but more like a union of kindred spirits. Hall and Nash from the NWO. Outlaw and James from DX. Waltman is the link between the two groups. That's what makes this a good idea. This wouldn't be a stale reunion of guys who've done all this before. The Outsiders have never been running buddies with The New Age Outlaws. Can you imagine Hall and Nash competing with Outlaw and James, trying to see who can work the crowd and the Internet more with shoot comments? NWX could be the spark that TNA needs right now.

All five of these veterans need it, too. Hall and Nash could have more relaxed roles as advisers, spokesmen, and occasional tag team partners. They would love the creative freedom. Outlaw, James, and Waltman are in dire need of career direction. Heck, they're in dire need of real identities.

I blame one man for this missed opportunity: NWA champion Jeff Jarrett. When Hall and Nash first joined TNA, Jarrett had to horn in as the third member of The Kings of Wrestling. Sure, I enjoyed the spectacle of KOW arriving at Orlando's Universal Studios wearing Elvis jumpsuits and riding in a Cadillac. But Jarrett has been trying to jump aboard the Hall and Nash Express for a long time, dating back to NWO 2000.

Jarrett did the same with The Outlaw, formerly known as Billy Gunn. Since joining TNA earlier this year, The Outlaw has been running with Jarrett and, more recently, Monty Brown. Wouldn't he rather be with the D-O-double-G? By hanging briefly with Hall and Nash, and now The Outlaw, Jarrett hasn't succeeded in becoming cool. He's made Hall, Nash, and Outlaw frighteningly uncool.

And what about Ron Killings and Konnan? Should B.G. James turn against 3 Live Kru to join NWX? Maybe. But wouldn't it be a better idea to recruit "The Truth" and "K-Dogg" for NWX? Absolutely. After all, James teamed with Killings (then known as K-Kwik) in the WWF after Gunn suffered a serious shoulder injury. And Konnan was a long-time member of the NWO.

Nash, Hall, Waltman, Outlaw, James, Killings, and Konnan as NWX. That sounds like a supergroup to me. Let's get this band together ... for the very first time. □

the straight shooter

By Dan Murphy

A FEW THINGS off the top of my head:

BLAME CANADA. There was a good reason Scott D'Amore was grinning so much on the night of April 9. Not only did Petey Williams win the ninth annual ECWA Super 8 Tournament, but D'Amore was able to boast about having no less than three of his former students—Williams, Alex Shelley, and Tyson Dux—entered into the most prestigious tournament on the independent scene. All three wrestlers trained in part at D'Amore's Can-Am Wrestling School in Windsor, Ontario.

"To my knowledge, this is the first time three students from the same school have ever competed in this event," D'Amore said after posing for photos with his prize pupils. "A night like this is great to get them recognition."

D'Amore, who works as the manager of Team Canada in TNA and also is the promoter of Border City Wrestling, said one of the keys to the school's success is what he calls its "after-care program."

"After the students finish their training, they are always welcome back," D-Amore said. "We'll help out however we can, and former students can come back to work with the younger guys and show them other things they may have learned."

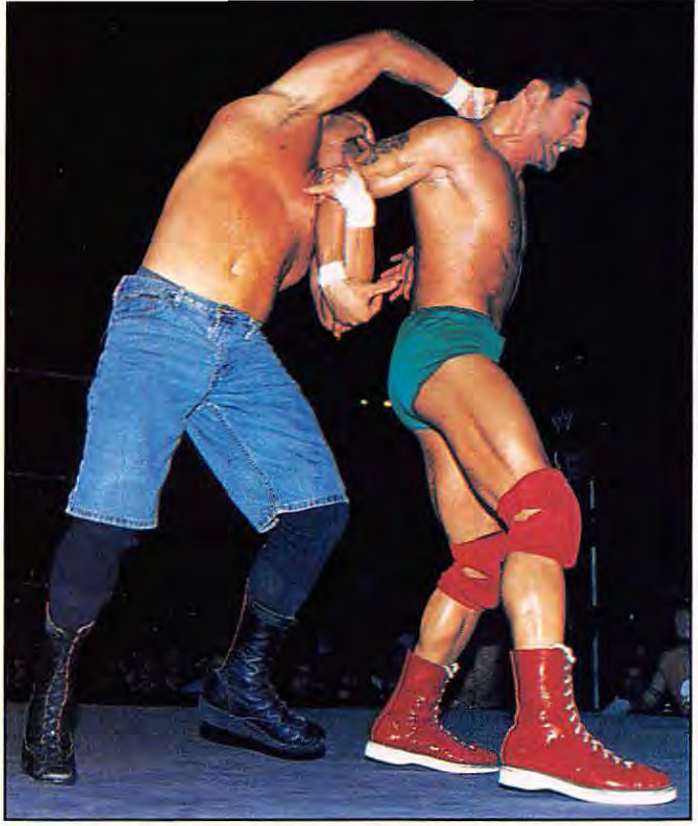
Williams, Shelley, and Dux have certainly benefited from that continuum of learning. Largely because of their solid—and in some cases breathtaking—ring work, this year's tournament, which featured less big name talent than some previous years, was one of the most exciting Super 8 events in years.

AND YOU, SIR, ARE NO HULK HOGAN. I really don't want to be a Triple-H hater. Frankly, I think he's an extremely talented wrestler who has done a great deal to benefit both WWE and wrestling in general.

But in recent months, it has become trendy for other WWE wrestlers to compare Triple-H to Double-H, that being Hulk Hogan. Both Batista and Chris Jericho made that comparison in recent Internet interviews. The timing has made some of the conspiracy theorists whisper that WWE management has made the Triple-H-Hogan comparison a talking point wrestlers are asked to stress to the media. More likely, Hogan's return has just put the "Hulkster" on wrestlers' minds and, when pressed, Jericho and Batista are trying to connect Hogan's era to today's era.

The fact of the matter is that any comparisons between Hogan and Triple-H are just ridiculous. Hogan

The big winner at this year's Super 8 Tournament—other than tourney winner Petey Williams (second from left)—had to be manager/promoter/trainer/great Canadian Scott D'Amore (far right). Two of his other proteges, Tyson Dux (far left) and Alex Shelley (third from left), also looked great at the event.



Less-heralded WWE cruiserweights Jamie Noble and Nunzio got spots in the WrestleMania XX cruiserweight open less than a year after Dan Murphy suggested such an idea in print. Coincidence? He has even bigger plans for the cruisers now. Anyone paying attention?

was the top draw in the history of the business and drew sellout crowds from 1984 to 1993. Conversely, Triple-H's years on top have coincided with drops in attendance, merchandise sales, TV ratings, and pay-per-view buys. I'm not saying that's all Hunter's fault; it's not. But it certainly doesn't support any argument that Triple-H is this era's Hogan.

Hogan had huge mainstream appeal. HHH is just starting to establish some (he got some nice reviews for his work in *Blade: Trinity*). Hogan was involved in four *PWI* Match of the Year winners (1985, 1988, 1990, and 2002), while HHH—a much better overall wrestler—has only been involved in one (2004), a match that also included technical masters Shawn Michaels and Chris Benoit. Listen, Triple-H is *not* the Pro Wrestling Antichrist. He's just not—and never will be—Hulk Hogan. Or Ric Flair, for that matter.

PUTTING OUT THE GOOD MOJO. Long-time readers of *PWI* will remember certain instances in which a wrestling storyline developed shortly after an eerily similar thought appeared in this magazine. One instance that comes to mind is the 1992 feud between Ric Flair and Randy Savage that centered on doctored photos of Ric and Elizabeth. We had written that very scenario a year earlier as a "Superstar Dream Match" in *Wrestling Superstars.*

Regular readers of this column might remember what I wrote after WrestleMania XIX, when so many cruiserweights were left off the big show: "If WWE had eliminated the ridiculous Miller Lite Catfight Girls segments, it could have added, say, an interbrand cruiserweight battle royal ... Instead, some of the most exciting and innovative talent on the roster was overlooked." The following year brought us the cruiserweight open.

I'm not naive enough to think WWE Creative steals our ideas, but just maybe something we write might put an idea in someone's head on occasion. Or maybe great minds really do think alike. So I'm putting this idea out there in case anyone of note is paying attention:

A WWE King of the Cruiserweights Tournament pay-per-view. A 32-man tourney featuring WWE talent and select international outsiders. The first-round matches could air over several weeks on *Smackdown* to hype the eventual 16-man tourney PPV. It could be one night only, much like the June ECW PPV.

Cruiserweight wrestling has a rabid, hardcore following. If the success of *The Rise And Fall Of ECW* DVD taught us anything, it's that if you throw hardcore fans a bone, they bite down hard.

Just putting it out there.

CONGRATULATIONS. And, finally, the upstate New York-based Pro Wrestling Hall of Fame has announced its induction class of 2005. This year's honorees include Penny Banner, Dick "The Destroyer" Beyer, Jack Brisco, promoter Paul Boesch, Orville Brown, The Crusher, The Bruiser, Fuzzy Cupid, Dory Funk Jr., Mike Mazurki, John Pesek, George "The Animal" Steele, and Ray Stern.

Now entering its fourth year, the PWHF has moved from Schenectady, New York, to nearby Amsterdam. Not to be confused with *The Wrestling Observer* Hall of Fame or the WWE Hall of Fame, the PWHF has established a physical building and museum dedicated to preserving and celebrating the sport's rich history. Congratulations to this year's Hall of Famers. □

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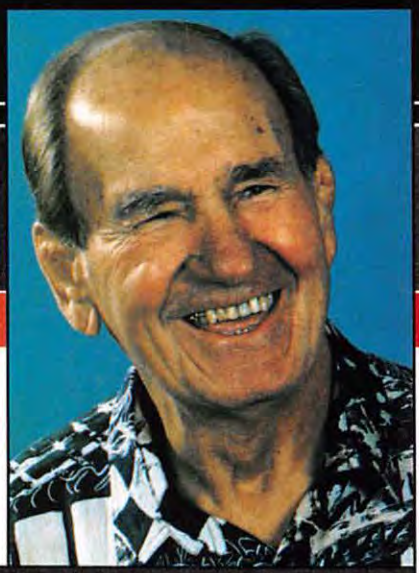


The Wrestling Observer

Hall of Fame

In each issue, *PWI* will honor one member of the *Wrestling Observer* Hall of Fame, which we recognize as the sport's official Hall of Fame

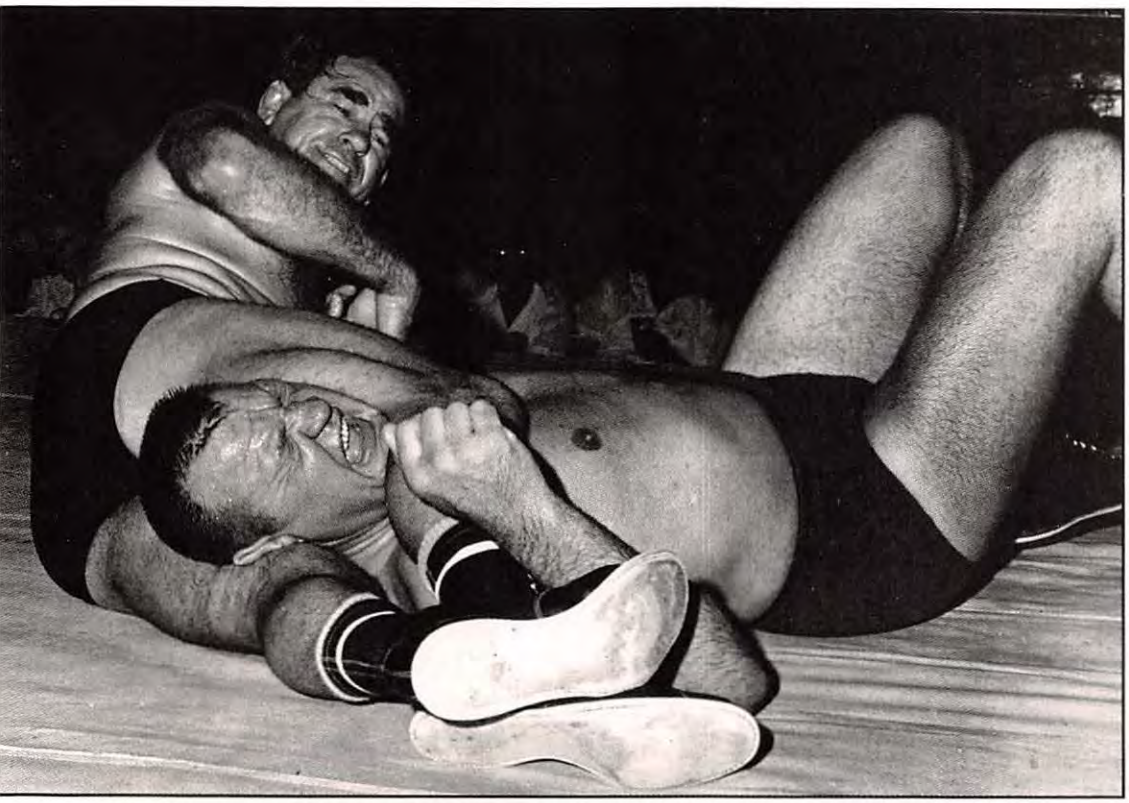
Lou Thesz

SIX-TIME NWA World champion Lou Thesz is widely regarded as the greatest wrestler of the first half of the 20th century, and quite possibly the greatest of all-time.

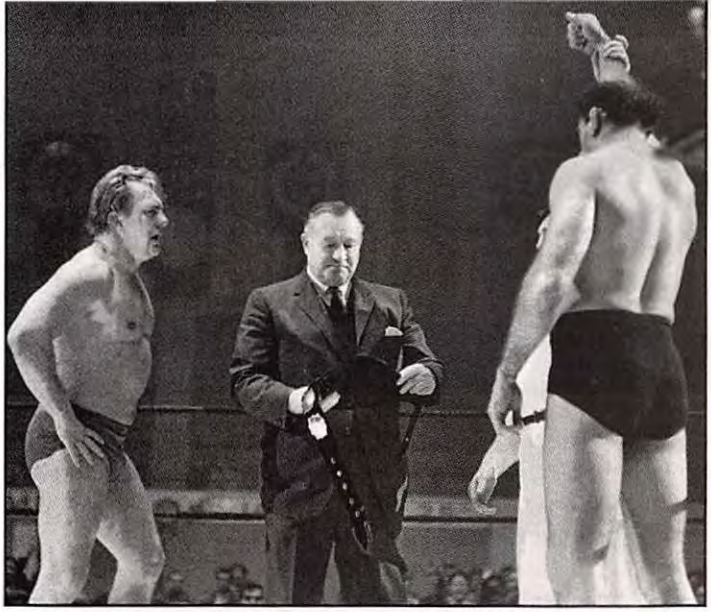
Thesz was born in April 1916 and was once described by *Wrestling Observer* Publisher Dave Meltzer as a "straight man in a silly world" for his reliance on athletic skill over gimmickry. He trained for a career inside the ring under George Tragos and Ad Santel and made his pro debut at age 17 in his hometown of St. Louis.

Thesz quickly carved out a reputation as wrestling's top "hooker," a legitimate grappler with an encyclopedic knowledge of submission holds, capable of handling himself in virtually any situation. It was Thesz' vaunted shooting skills that earned him respect in territories throughout the U.S. and beyond, helping him become wrestling's top name and one of the first television stars of the 1940s and '50s.

At 6'2" and 225 pounds, Thesz was deceptively strong, blending raw power and technical skill. His pet finishers were the stepover toehold facelock (STF) and a vertical flying bodypress that came to be known as the Thesz press. He won his first world championship on December 29, 1937, defeating Everett Marshall to win the National Wrestling Association (the precursor to the National Wrestling Alliance) championship in St. Louis. That first reign came to an abrupt end just six weeks later when Thesz was stopped by Steve Casey. Thesz regained the championship on February 23, 1939, with another win over Marshall. He lost the belt to former NFL star Bronko Nagurski four months later.



When Lou Thesz clamped on a hold—even a hold as simple as a headscissors—he could really clamp it on. He was one of the sport's true "hookers." He even gave his autobiography that appropriate title.



The last of Thesz' six NWA World title reigns began when he was nearly 47 years old and he defeated Buddy Rogers in Toronto in 1963. His last match was still to come 27 years later.

He regained the NWA title on April 25, 1947, beating "Whipper" Billy Watson in St. Louis. Reign number three would come to a close on November 21, 1947, when Thesz was defeated by Bill Longson.

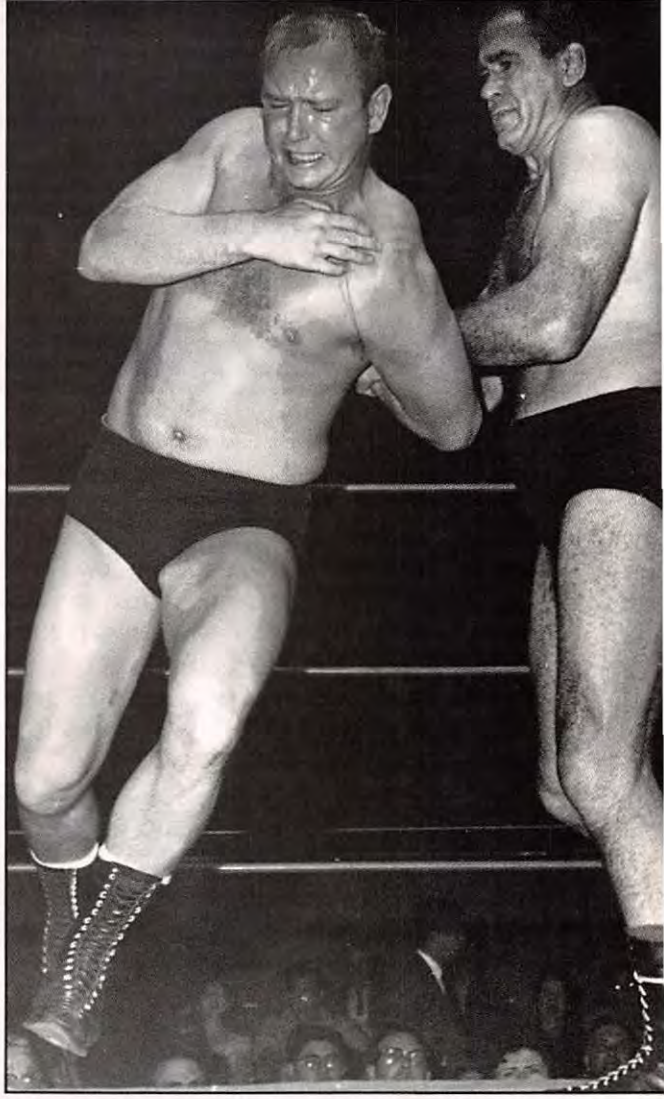
But it was Thesz' fourth title reign that established him as a legend. Thesz recaptured the World title on July 20, 1948, in a rematch with Longson. From 1948 through mid-March of 1956, Thesz went undefeated, wrestling an average of 250 dates a year against the sport's top contenders. During his reign, the modern-day NWA was created with Thesz at the forefront. He became one of the sport's early superstars, frequently posing for publicity photographs with the day's top athletes and movie and TV stars.

Thesz' epic fourth reign came to a close on March 15, 1956, as he was defeated by Watson in Toronto. He regained the title eight months later with a win over Watson and lost the belt a year plus five days later to Dick Hutton.

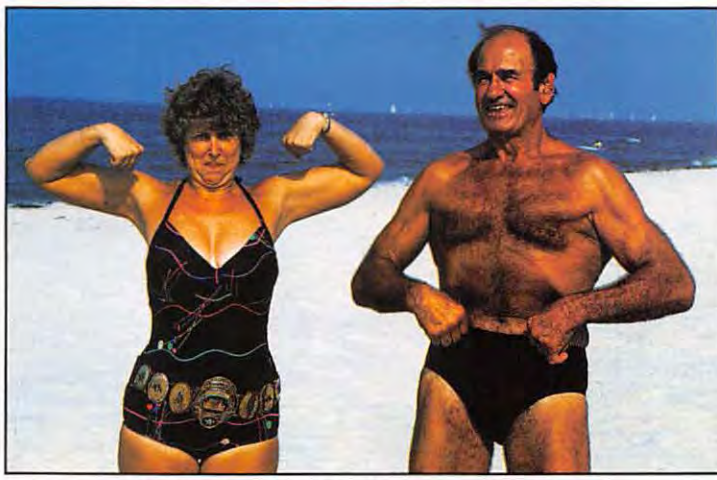
He won his final World championship from Buddy Rogers on January 24, 1963, with his reign lasting three years, until Gene Kiniski finally took the championship from the "hooker" for the last time. Thesz continued to compete occasionally throughout the 1970s and 1980s. Even into his late-60s, he regularly visited the gym and maintained an impressive physique.

One of the first American wrestlers to gain a following in Japan, Thesz decided to wrestle one final exhibition match in 1990 at the age of 73, despite having recently undergone hip replacement surgery. Thesz faced his protege Masa Chono in a six-minute match in which he submitted to the STF. That bout made Thesz the first wrestler ever to compete in seven different decades.

After his retirement from the ring, Thesz served as the president of the Cauliflower Alley Club and published his autobiography, *Hooker*. He was involved in several charities and remained a staunch advocate for the true sport of wrestling. Thesz died on April 28, 2002, just three weeks after undergoing open heart surgery. He was 86. □



Dory Funk Jr. wasn't quite ready to be NWA World champion when he clashed with Thesz in 1964. His one and only reign began half a decade later.



Thesz lived life to its fullest until the very end, and his wife, Charlie, was the love of his life. He even let her try on the NWA World title belt for size now and then.

independent roundup

By Liz Hunter

PETEY WILLIAMS BECAME the first Canadian to win the prestigious Super 8 Tournament on April 9 in Newark, Delaware. Williams defeated **Puma**, a young upstart from the Inoki Dojo in California. The "Canadian Destroyer" also defeated fellow Border City Wrestling regular **Alex Shelley** in a wild semifinal bout that was touted by many as the best match of the tournament. TNA **Team Canada** leader **Scott D'Amore** was on hand to watch Williams plow through the competition, which included a total of three wrestlers he trained (Williams, Shelley, and **Tyson Dux**).

Petey Williams made his trainer, Scott D'Amore, proud by becoming the first Canadian to win the Super 8 Tournament. Williams even beat fellow D'Amore trainee Alex Shelley on his way to the finals.

"This is a great day for Canada," said D'Amore triumphantly. "Petey's win combined with a good showing by Shelley and Tyson proves that the better wrestlers come from north of America."

The shocking death of **Chris Candido** on April 28 hit the independent community hard, as Candido was making a strong comeback on the indy scene. Promotions all across the U.S. held 10-bell salutes to honor his memory. TNA's **Lance Hoyt**, Candido's tag team partner in his final match, joined the wrestlers of Professional Championship Wrestling in paying his final respects to his fallen partner. In Candido's home state of New Jersey, National Wrestling Superstars changed the name of its annual Jersey J-Cup Tournament to the Chris Candido Memorial J-Cup Tournament. Several members of Candido's family were on hand in Toms River to award the trophy to tournament winner **Mike Kruel**, who had defeated **Azriael** in the finals.

NWA Wildside, one of the top independent promotions in North America, held its last show on April 29 in Cornelia, Georgia. Wildside has ceased operations, as its owner, **Bill Behrens**, has officially accepted a position with WWE's new developmental territory in nearby McDonough, Georgia. Good independent wrestling will not cease in Cornelia, though, as OMEGA Wrestling will now take over the territory. You might remember OMEGA as the starting ground for **Matt** and **Jeff Hardy**. It's been rumored that The Hardy Boyz will reunite for the OMEGA shows once Matt's no-compete clause with WWE expires in July. On that last card, long-time Wildside wrestler **Onyx** won the heavyweight title one last time, making him the only three-time heavyweight champion in Wildside history. After the bout, Onyx presented the belt to diehard Wildside fan **Laura Adams**.

Poor Puma. First he came up short in the finals of the Super 8 Tournament, and then he was pinned by **Aaron Idol** in the finals of the fifth annual Pacific Cup Tournament. Puma got his revenge, though, as he and **American Dragon**, a fellow New Japan Pro Wrestling regular who was also involved in the three-way final, destroyed the Pacific Cup trophy and attacked Idol. NWA/ECCW owner **Dave Republic** then challenged **Antonio Inoki** and NJPW to a fight. Inoki was given 30 days to respond.

John McChesney pinned **Low-Ki** in the finals of the International Wrestling Cartel's Super Indy Tournament on April 29 in McKeesport, Pennsylvania ... In another Pittsburgh area tournament, **Scottie Gash** pinned **Adam**

Cage in the finals of the NWA Pro Wrestling Express Ray Mendez Memorial Tournament. The tournament is named after a long-time PWX fan who died last year ... Carolina veteran Marc Ash has been cast as a zombie in an upcoming movie called *Dead Heist* ... Super Destroyer is gone from Championship Wrestling. He lost the fall during a "War Games"-style cage match on April 23 in Kingsport, Tennessee, dropping the match for a team that also included Beau James and Josh Cody.

Quick title changes: Maximum Championship Wrestling, Dover, DE, April 30: Jimmy Dream pinned Asian Sinsation to become the new cruiserweight champion ... 38 Proof beat tag team champs New Wave to win the title ... Sam Jones pinned U.S. champ Shaka to win the title ... E.L. Stanley beat Jason Marks by submission to become the first respect champion ... ***Trans-American Championship Wrestling, Dyer, AR, April 30:*** Humphrey the Rodeo Clown defeated Jimmy Candler to win the junior heavyweight title ... Jimmy Candler and Brian Peaches won a four-corners elimination tag match over John Deaton and Humphrey, Jenivel and Keaton, and The V.I.P.s to win the vacant U.S. tag team title ... ***Tarheel Wrestling Entertainment, Lexington, NC, April 30:*** Jose Sanchez pinned Scrap Yard Dog to win the vacant TV title ... Lodi pinned heavyweight champion Bone Krusher to win the title ... ***National Wrestling Superstars, Port Monmouth, NJ, April 30:*** Tony Flow won a three-way match against Damian Adams and Mike Kruel to win the junior heavyweight title ... ***Mega Championship Wrestling, North Ridgeville, OH, April 30:*** The Bouncer defeated U.S. champ J.T. Lightning to win the title ... ***Professional Championship Wrestling, Arlington, TX, April 30:*** Stephen Murphy won a six-way ladder match against cruiserweight champion G-Slice, Robert Evans, James Johnson, J.T. LaMotta, and Claudia to win the title ... ***NWA Wildside, Cornelia, GA, April 29:*** Onyx beat heavyweight champion Rainman to win the title ... ***UCW-Zero, Salt Lake City, UT, April 24:*** G.Q. and Tristen Gallo defeated Los Mochis to win the tag team title ... ***Supreme Pro Wrestling, Sacramento, CA, April 24:*** The Beautiful People defeated The Lethal Lottery III to win the trios title ... ***NWA Virginia, Richmond, VA, April 23:*** Preston Quinn and Mike Booth defeated tag champs Scotty Blaze and Pharaoh to win the title ... Lexie Fyfe defeated NWA women's champion Kiley McLean in a no-disqualification match to win the title ... ***Trans-American Championship Wrestling, Dyer, AR, April 23:*** John Deaton defeated U.S. champ Tank McClain to win the belt ... ***Xtreme Maximum Championship Wrestling, Nitro, WV, April 23:*** Rated X defeated tag champs Projekt Ego to win the title in a TLC match ... The Unholy beat hardcore champ Death Falcon Zero to win the title in a last-man-standing match ... ***Championship Wrestling, Kingsport, TN, April 23:*** Dr. Tom Prichard defeated National champion Alyx Winters to win the title ... ***Blue Water Championship Wrestling, Fort Gratiot, MI, April 23:*** Chris Sabin defeated Truth Martini, Zach Gowen, and Petey Williams in a fatal four-way elimination to win the cruiserweight championship ... ***NWA Mid-South Wrestling, Humboldt, TN, April 22:*** The Blackbirds defeated Void and A.J. Bradley to capture the vacant NWA Mid-South tag team title ... ***New England Championship Wrestling, Somerville, MA, April 21:*** The Logan Brothers defeated tag champs Rave to win the belts ... ***Border City Wrestling/Prime Time Wrestling, Belleville, MI, April 17:*** Petey Williams won a three-way match against Chris Sabin and Alex Shelley to become the new BCW TV champion ... ***Pittsburgh Professional Wrestling, McKees Rocks, PA, April 16:*** Powerhouse Hughes defeated Sebastian Dark to win the vacant Pittsburgh Pro title ... ***NWA Oklahoma, Ponca City, OK, April 16:*** Kevin Northcutt beat NWA Southwest champion Tejas to win the title ... Gary Graham won the NWA Oklahoma X title in a four-way weapons match against Renegade, The Specialist, and Dominator ... Tim WarCloud and Tejas beat NWA North American tag champs Kevin Northcutt and John Saxon to win the title ... ***NWA Oklahoma, Tahlequah, OK, April 9:*** John O'Malley beat heavyweight champion Michael Barry in best-of-three falls match to win the title. □

Onyx finished his tenure in NWA Wildside on top by winning the Wildside heavyweight title on April 29, the date of Wildside's last show. Onyx then made one fan very happy by presenting the belt to her at ringside.

the international report

By Mike Spillane

TOGETHER, ALL-JAPAN Women's and GAEA carried *joshi* wrestling through the last quarter-century or so. Now, sadly, both companies are defunct, and women's wrestling in Japan has never been at a lower point. These two promotions, along with the defunct ARSION group, took turns as the top ladies' promotions in Japan dating back to the glory days of **The Crush Gals** in the 1980s, when All-Japan Women's first caught fire.

When All-Japan Women's began to decline, other groups, like **Chigusa Nagayo's** GAEA and, later, **Aja Kong's** ARSION, stepped up, providing top-notch female wrestling action to the eroding fan base. Now, unable to draw the kinds of crowds that once made the "Dream Slam" event at the Tokyo Dome an overwhelming success, Japanese women's wrestling has reached its nadir. In April, both GAEA and All-Japan Women's promoted their final cards, signaling the end of a significant era in wrestling history. The name All-Japan Women's will at least live on, though, as Zero-One Max has acquired the rights to its intellectual properties and will promote new shows using that name.

Women's matches like Bull Nakano vs. Alundra Blayze (Madusa) drew huge crowds in Japan in years past. But recently, the popularity of women's wrestling has dropped off dramatically. Two major women's promotions folded just this April.

Mexico's ailing Toryumon X promotion and training facility have been limping along since last summer. The vast majority of the Toryumon's roster left and formed Dragon Gate, a Japanese independent company that was completely divested of any ties to **Ultimo Dragon** and his Toryumon, even though practically every Dragon Gate wrestler was trained at the Toryumon facility. Since then, Toryumon X has been based in Naucalpan, Mexico, the site of the company's training center dating back to the 1990s. There, Dragon, **Skayde**, and **Negro Navarro** have been preparing a new class of trainees, as well as developing the few remaining Toryumon wrestlers, like **Milanito Collection a.t.** and **Kanjyuoru Matsuyama**, both of whom recently toured the United States.

Now, several defections from Dragon Gate have led to the creation of a new Toryumon presence in Japan, Dragon Door, which will be run in cooperation with the team of wrestlers currently in Mexico. Since the Toryumon has graduated some 11 classes of wrestlers since forming, many have gone on to compete for companies like New Japan (**Taiji Ishimori**), All-Japan (**Suwa**, **Taru**), Michinoku Pro (**Sato Twins**), and others. It is expected that many of the Toryumon grads that have since turned freelance will return for the debut of Dragon Door. Its first event is tentatively slated for August of this year.

Speaking of Ultimo Dragon, the former J-Crown champion has been bouncing back and forth between identities. Last October, Dragon gave up his most famous masked identity, anticipating he would return to WWE without a mask. However, after he cast off his Ultimo Dragon per-

sona, WWE never came calling, so **Yoshihiro Asai** decided to adopt a temporary identity. Starting in February, Asai made a clear nod to his idol, **Satoru Sayama**, the original **Tiger Mask**, when he donned a tiger hood of his own and took the name **Second Tiger**. However, this, too, proved short-lived, as just two months later, he returned to work at Arena Mexico for CMLL under the name of Ultimo Dragon again.

Considering the number of masked identities and confusing names that populate the colorful world of Lucha Libre, it is no wonder even the most ardent fans have a hard time keeping their score cards accurate at times. A recent newspaper article revealed some of the strange lineage in the Pierroth "family." The original **Pierroth** was one of the biggest stars of Lucha Libre in the 1970s and 1980s. Then, in 1989, along came **Pierroth Jr.**, wearing the same mask as the original, which led most to believe that they were family.

In Lucha Libre, however, the designations of "senior" and "junior" often do *not* denote the same relations we would expect. A popular example is that of **Rey Misterio Jr.**, who is actually the nephew (not the son) of **Rey Misterio Sr.** As it turns out, Pierroth Jr. is not related to the original Pierroth. Since only Pierroth Jr. is active today (he wrestles for CMLL), he now goes only by the name of Pierroth—which is helpful, since there are also other wrestlers called **El Hijo del Pierroth** and Pierroth Jr. As revealed in a recent obituary, these two "sons" aren't the sons of Pierroth at all, nor do they seem to be grandsons of the original Pierroth. Not much is known about El Hijo del Pierroth or the new Pierroth Jr., but it is possible that they are not related to each other, either. Ultimately, what would appear to be a wrestling family of grandfather, father, and two sons might, in fact, be four totally unrelated people!

Takeshi Rikioh, a mid-card wrestler for Pro Wrestling NOAH, ended **Kenta Kobashi's** nearly two-year reign as Global Honored Crown champion in March. The unexpected title change, which in many ways could have made Rikioh a new major player in *puroresu,* instead has left fans fairly cold. Kobashi's nickname among NOAH fans was "The Perfect Champion," a title that Rikioh is having some difficulty living up to. Kobashi's title defenses were always placed in the main event position of NOAH cards, but since men like **Mitsuharu Misawa** and **Jun Akiyama** are much bigger draws than Rikioh, some NOAH cards now feature the title match as third from the top of the bill. The result has been a largely flat reign for Rikioh, who has not stepped up his game in most people's eyes, and seems to prove the old adage that the man makes the belt, not the other way around.

Old fans of ECW will be glad to see Super Crazy gracing the rings of WWE this year. In this case, however, WWE's gain is a major loss for AAA, although AAA has acquired some key talent as well.

A major shift of talent between WWE, AAA, and CMLL has rocked the Lucha landscape. Recently signed to WWE contracts were **Juventud Guerrera**, **Super Crazy**, and the original **Psicosis**, who has recently gone by **Nicho**. Juvi, teaming up with **Mr. Aguila** (once WWF star **Essa Rios**), recently became a top attraction for AAA, while the return of Nicho to feud with the impostor **AAA Psicosis** has done big box office. The loss of these stars comes as a big blow to the thin talent ranks of AAA, the promotion run by **Antonio Pena**.

Not to be outdone, Pena turned around and raided one of the biggest stars from rival **Paco Alonso** and his long-running CMLL. **Shocker**, a recent star of TNA as well as the star of an international McDonald's commercial, was in many ways the **Steve Austin** of CMLL television. Whether *technico* or *rudo,* his charisma and hot temper put the fans squarely behind him no matter whom he faced. Most CMLL stars are not under contract, but remain loyal to Alonso and the Lutteroth family that began promoting Lucha in Mexico more than 70 years ago out of respect and a sense of tradition. However, this method also makes it easy for talent to come and go, and Shocker has gone the way of AAA. Joining him in the jump is **Vampiro**, another charismatic wrestler with a solid cult following. While the talent ranks run deep within CMLL, the loss of two stars as big as these must be seen as a major blow. □

arena reports

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Spotlight Card of the Month

NEW YORK, NY—WWE *Smackdown* taping/*Raw* live broadcast at Madison Square Garden: **Paul London** & **Nunzio** defeated **Chavo Guerrero Jr.** & **Billy Kidman** ... **Booker T** wrestled to a double-disqualification with **The Big Show** ... **Matt Morgan** defeated **Brett Matthewz** ... **The Big Show** & **Booker T** defeated **Kurt Angle** & **John Bradshaw Layfield** ... **Joey Mercury** & **Johnny Nitro** defeated Smackdown tag team champions **Eddie Guerrero** & **Rey Misterio Jr.** to win the title ... Smackdown champion **John Cena** pinned U.S. champion **Orlando Jordan** in a non-title match ... **Edge** wrestled to a no-contest with **Chris Benoit** ... Raw tag team champions **William Regal** & **Tajiri** defeated **Romeo Roselli** & **Antonio Thomas** ... **Shawn Michaels** defeated **Muhammad Hassan** by disqualification ... Intercontinental champion **Shelton Benjamin** pinned **Simon Dean** ... **Jim Ross** pinned **Triple-H** in a no-disqualification match after **Batista** interfered.
(04-18-05)

—"Spotlight" photos by George Napolitano

UNITED STATES

ARIZONA

TEMPE—Impact Zone Wrestling at The Sets: Tag team champs **Peter Goodman** & **Antonio Mestre** defeated **Mr. Showtime** & **Paid Daily** ... **Hawaiian Lion** defeated **Flood** ... **Ryan Lynch** defeated **Lucha Reigns** ... **Adrenelyn** defeated **Luscious** to retain the women's title ... **G.Q. Gallo** & **Lawrence Tyler** defeated **Jack Durango** & **Mike James** ... Heritage champ **Lil' Nate** defeated **Chris Kole.**
(04-26-05)

—Bradley Cambell

ARKANSAS

DYER—Trans-American Championship Wrestling at the Community Center: **Brian Peaches** pinned **Eric Keaton** ... **Jenivel** beat **Relina** ... **Humphrey the Rodeo Clown** defeated **Jimmy Candler** to win the junior heavyweight title ... Brass knuckles champ **Josh LaRue** beat **Rocky Gilmore** ... **Jimmy Candler** & **Brian Peaches** won a four-corners elimination match over **John Deaton** & **Humphrey**, **Jenivel** & **Keaton**, and **The V.I.P.s** to win the vacant U.S. tag team title.
(04-30-05)

—Randy Deaton

CALIFORNIA

SACRAMENTO—Supreme Pro Wrestling at St. Peter's Hall: **Seito Hayashi** defeated **Virgil Flynn** ... **Adam Thornstowe** defeated **Steel** ... **DJ Rizz** & **Dub C** defeated **J.D. Bishop** & **Brian Raymond** ... **Joey Harder** beat **El Flaco Loco** ... **Vinnie Massaro** defeated **Jesus Kruze** ... Extreme champion **Bonzai Bruce** defeated **Sir Samurai** ... **The Beautiful People** defeated **The Lethal Lottery III** to win the trios title ... Heavyweight champ **Dante** defeated **Helfyre.**
(04-24-05)

—Harry Larrison

CONNECTICUT

BRISTOL—Northeast Wrestling at Central High School: **Jeff Starr** beat **Texas Outlaw** ... **Short Sleeve Sampson** pinned **Little Killa** ... **Ron Zombie** defeated **Dylan Kage** ... **Mikey Batts** defeated **Rob Eckos** ... **Kurt Adonis** pinned **The Masked Executioner II** ... **Xavier** pinned **Jay Lethal** ... **Jerry Lawler** pinned **King Kong Bundy** (with **Jonathan Coachman**) (NEW Commissioner **Mick Foley** was the special guest referee for the match).
(04-30-05)

—Joe Hughes

DELAWARE

DOVER—AWA-Maximum Championship Wrestling at the YMCA: **Jimmy Dream** beat **Slayer** ... **38 Proof** beat **The Varsity Boyz** and **The Established** in a three-way match ... **Studley T** won a three-way match against **Phenix** and **Warlock** ... **Winky Lexington** & **Kris Krude** beat **The New Wave** ... **Tristan Spade** beat **Jason Marks** ... Heavyweight champ **Massive Mike** beat **James.**
(04-24-05)

—Harold Reddick

NEWARK—ECWA Super 8 Tournament at the Greater Newark Boys' & Girls' Club: ***Super 8 Tournament, quarterfinals:*** **Puma** defeated **Eric Matlock** ... **J.J. Perez** defeated **Tyson Dux** ... **Alex Shelley** pinned **Andrew Ryker** ... **Petey Williams** defeated **Rory Fox** ... ***Semifinals:*** Puma beat Perez ... Williams defeated Shelley ... ***Finals:*** Williams defeated Puma to win the tournament ... ***In non-tournament matches:*** **The Logan Brothers** won a 12-man tag team summit ... Tag team champions **The Valedictorians** defeated **The Logan Brothers.**
(04-09-05)

—Jason Langin

Spike Dudley has been quiet since dropping the cruiserweight title to Funaki in December. Perhaps the sight of an old ECW foe in the form of Nunzio fired him up a tad.

FLORIDA

ORLANDO—TNA Lockdown pay-per-view at Universal Studios (all matches held inside a steel cage): **Apolo** & **Sonny Siaki** defeated **Chris Candido** & **Lance Hoyt** ... **Dustin Rhodes** defeated **Bobby Rude** in a best-of-three-falls match (the third fall was a blindfold match) ... **Shocker** defeated **Chris Sabin**, **Michael Shane**, and **Sonjay Dutt** in a four-way elimination match ... **Jeff Hardy** defeated **Raven** in a tables and chairs cage match ... NWA tag team champions **Chris Harris** & **James Storm** defeated **Petey Williams** & **Eric Young** ... TNA X champion **Christopher Daniels** defeated **Elix Skipper** ... **Dallas Page**, **Sean Waltman**, & **B.G. James** defeated **Jeff Jarrett**, **Monty Brown**, & **The Outlaw** ... **A.J. Styles** pinned **Abyss**.
(04-24-05)

—Bill Meltzer

GEORGIA

COLUMBUS—Georgia Championship Wrestling at the GCW Sports Arena: **Lee Thomas** defeated **Andy Douglas** ... **Sean Evans** beat **The V** ... **Damien Steele** beat **Lord Humongous** ... **Andy Douglas**, **Eric Young**, & **Chic Donovan** beat **Erik Watts**, **John Bogie**, & **Lee Thomas** ... **Bull Buchanan** & **David Young** beat **Sonny Siaki** & **A.J. Steele** ... **Greg Brown** beat **Jerry Oates** in a lumberjack match.
(04-30-05)

—Chuck Wike

CARNSVILLE—IWA Flashfire at the Franklin County High School: Flashfire tag champs **Tommy Sawyer** & **The Executioner** beat **Big Country** & **Lance Christopher** ... **Logan** pinned **Tow Truck** ... Flashfire U.S. champ **Casey J** pinned **Draco** ... **Boulevard** pinned **Rahn Jordan** in a "match of respect" ... **Craze Shae** pinned **Kidd Silver** ... Flashfire champ **Tower** pinned **Don Matthews**.
(04-29-05)

—Brad Bates

CORNELIA—NWA Wildside's final show at the NWA Arena: **Sweet Dreams**, **Cru Jones**, & **Skeeter Frost** beat **Adam Roberts**, **T.C. Carnage**, & **Adam Armor** ... **Ray Gordy** beat **Matt Sydal** and **Jimmy Rave** in a three-way elimination match ... **Daizee Haze** beat **Patrick Bentley** ... TV champ **Brandon P** beat **Jeff Lewis** ... **The Lost Boys** beat **Mikal Adryan** & **Luke** in a no-disqualification match ... **Caprice Coleman** & **Tony Mamaluke** beat **Todd Sexton** & **Tony Stradlin** by double-submission ... **Slim J** defeated **Delirious**, **Nick Halen**, and **Jay Fury** in a ladder match to retain the junior heavyweight title ... **Onyx** beat heavyweight champion **Rainman** to win the title ... **Jason Cross**, **John Phoenix**, & **Air Paris** beat **Salvatore Rinauro**, **Seth Delay**, & **Fast Eddie** ... **Iceberg**, **Tank**, & **New Jack** beat **Ace Rockwell**, **Shaun Tempers**, & **Scottie Wrenn** and **Murder One**, **Jeremy V**, & **Mikal Adryan** in a three-way tag team "War Games" cage match.
(04-29-05)

—Phil Visone

ILLINOIS

MASON—National Wrestling Coalition at the Civic Center: **Jaxson Pride** defeated **Apriq Laveq** ... **Timber** pinned **J.C. Michaels** ... **T-Bolt Baxton** defeated **Kid Crazy** ... Tag team champions **J.R. Hart** & **Kapone** beat **George the Animal Jr.** & **Truk Thompson** and **The Patriot** & **Kid Justice** in a three-way match ... **Tommy Callaway** and **Axe Stevens** wrestled to a double-countout ... **Steven Davis** & **The Intimidator** defeated **Vulcan** & **Sean Chambers**.
(04-16-05)

—Brad Smithson

INDIANA

MADISON—AWA Supreme Championship Wrestling at the SCW Building: **William Valentine** beat **Jeremy the Security Guard** by submission ... **Billy Maverick** defeated **Bob Coots** by disqualification ... U.S. champion **Nick Noble** beat **Eric Draven** in a 60-minute "Ironman" match ... **Billy Maverick**, **Eric Draven**, & **Jeremy the Security Guard** beat **William Valentine**, **Bob Coots**, & **Nick Noble**.
(04-23-05)

—Shawn Sands

KENTUCKY

CENTRAL CITY—Bad 2 The Bone Wrestling at the National Guard Armory: **Manslaughter** pinned **Blade** ... **Texas Hangman** defeated **K-Lo** ... **Robin NightWing** beat **Brandon Blaze** for the U.S. title ... Heavyweight champion **J.C. Bailey** and **Billy Black** wrestled to a no-contest ... **Simon Sezz** pinned **Vic the Bruiser**.
(04-09-05)

—Joe Bailey

MASSACHUSETTS

SOMERVILLE—New England Championship Wrestling at the Good Time Emporium: **Ray Diamond** & **Rob Impact** defeated **Rocco Abruzzi** & **Canadian Lightning** ... **Pat Masters** beat **Shawn Candid** ... TV champ **Ru Starr** defeated **Fred Curry Jr.** ... **PRIDE** defeated **Sabotage** ... **Aaron Morrison** beat **Bryce Andrews** ... **The Logans** beat tag team champions **RAVE** to win the title ... **Bob Evans** defeated **Paul Lombardi** in an "I Quit" match ... Heavyweight champion **Chris Venom**, **Mike Bennett**, & **Scott Ashworth** beat **Kevin Landry**, **Michael Sain**, & **Alex Arion**.
(04-21-05)

—Ken Hackensack

DORCHESTER—Ring of Honor at the National Guard Armory: **Vordell Walker** defeated **Kevin Steen** ... **Roderick Strong** defeated **El Generico** ... **Deranged** & **Cheech** defeated **Azreal** & **Dixie** ... Pure champ **Jay Lethal** defeated **Spanky** ... **C.M. Punk** defeated **Mike Kruel** ... **Alex Shelley** won a four-corners survival match against **Samoa Joe**, **Colt Cabana**, and **Nigel McGuinness** ... ROH champion **Austin Aries** wrestled **James Gibson** to a no-contest ... **Bryan Danielson** defeated **Homicide** in a lumberjack match.
(04-16-05)

—Meghann Fitzpatrick

MICHIGAN

HILLSDALE—Championship International Wrestling at the High School Gym: **Tommy Titus** defeated **Dave DuPont** ... **Quinson Valentino** defeated **Big Hoss Monahan** ... Heavyweight champion **The Milwaukee Mauler** defeated **Doink** in a fall-counts-anywhere match ... **P.J. Flowers** beat **Daniel Sigma** ... **Gary Dawson** beat **Elvis Elliott** ... **Chainsaw** defeated **Bull Wheeler** ... **Nitro** beat **Kurt Kaoss** ... **Nikolai Volkoff** & **The Patriot** defeated **Bounty Hunter** & **Virgil**.
(04-30-05)

—Zach Kerr

FORT GRATIOT—Blue Water Championship Wrestling at the Birchwood Sports Dome: **D-Ray 3000** defeated **Kevin Baker** ... **Connecticut Experience** wrestled **Atomic Demolition** to a double-countout ... **Chris Sabin** won a fatal four-way match against **Truth Martini**, **Zach Gowen**, and **Petey Williams** to become the cruiserweight champion ... **Super J** beat **Josie** by disqualification ... **The Half-Ton Hillbillies** won a 13-team gauntlet match ... Heavyweight champ **Sean Casey** defeated **Shark Boy** ... **Marty Jannetty** beat **Buff Bagwell** by disqualification in the special challenge match.
(04-23-05)

—Norm Coleman

Booker T discovered that it isn't so easy to beat Big Show ... or even get his hands all the way around his ample waist. They wrestled to a double-DQ.

MISSOURI

ST. PETERS—Gateway Championship Wrestling at the National Guard Armory: **Rebecca Raze** beat **Rat Boy** ... **Mike Sharona** beat **Melvin Talent** by disqualification ... **Cabal** won a triple threat match against **Kevin X** and **Michael Strider** ... **Cameron Cage** & **Steven Kennedy** beat **Shorty Biggs** & **Jackal** ... **Chaz Wesson** & **Shaun Starz** beat **Dingo** & **Trent Stone** ... Light heavyweight champion **Jynx** beat **Michael Serious** ... **D.N.S.** beat **Big Bad Ben** & **Mike Sharona** ... Heavyweight champ **Kory Twist** beat **Sean Vincent**.
(04-30-05)

—Patrick Brandmeyer

NEW HAMPSHIRE

MANCHESTER—WWE Backlash pay-per-view at the Verizon Wireless Arena: Intercontinental champion **Shelton Benjamin** pinned **Chris Jericho** ... **The Hurricane** & **Rosey** won a five-team gauntlet match, last defeating **Robert Conway** & **Sylvan Grenier**, to win the Raw tag team title ... **Edge**

U.S. champ Orlando Jordan had trouble seeing Smackdown champ John Cena at the end of their match. He must have known he was looking up at the lights at least.

defeated **Chris Benoit** in a last-man-standing match ... **Kane** pinned **Viscera** ... **Hulk Hogan** & **Shawn Michaels** defeated **Khosrow Daivari** & **Muhammad Hassan** ... Raw champion **Batista** pinned **Triple-H**.
(05-01-05)

—Dan Murphy

NEW JERSEY

TOMS RIVER—National Wrestling Superstars at the Recreation Station Arena: ***Chris Candido Memorial J-Cup Tournament, quarterfinals:*** **Azriael** won a four-way match against **Louis Ortiz**, **Drew Blood**, and **Tommy Force** ... **Deranged** won a four-way match against **Archadia**, **Neeno Capone**, and **Gavin Quest** ... **Trent Acid** won a four-way match against **Nick Berk**, **Devan Moore**, and **Tony Flow** ... **Mike Kruel** won a four-way match against **Steve Zapf**, **Slayer**, and **Damian Adams** ... ***Semifinals:*** Azriael beat Deranged ... Kruel defeated Acid ... ***Finals:*** Kruel beat Azriael to win the tournament ... ***In non-tournament matches:*** WXW champion **Bison Bravado** beat **Funky White Boy** ... AWA champion **Danny Demanto** defeated **J.D. Smooth** ... **Jim Neidhart** & **Eric Justice** defeated **Simon Diamond** & **Hasheem Ali**.
(04-30-05)

—Mike Uhrmacher

RAHWAY—Jersey All Pro Wrestling at the Rec Center: **Jay Lethal** defeated **Ash Samuels** ... **Beef Wellington** beat **Danny Demanto** ... Light heavyweight champ **Azriael** defeated **Eric Cooper** ... Tag champs **Teddy Hart** & **Jack Evans** beat **Dan Barry** & **Plazma** ... **Dixie** defeated **Nino Capone** ... **E.C. Negro** beat **Trent Acid** ... **Super Dragon** defeated **Quicksilver** ... Light heavyweight champ **Azriael** defeated **Excess 69** ... Tag team champs **Teddy Hart** & **Jack Evans** defeated **Kevin Steen** & **Beef Wellington** ... **Low-Ki** defeated **El Generico** ... **Jay Lethal** defeated **B-Boy**
(04-23-05)

—Lia Henderson

NEW YORK

ELMIRA—WWE at First Arena: Raw tag team champions **The Hurricane** & **Rosey** defeated **Romeo Roselli** & **Antonio Thomas** and **William Regal** & **Tajiri** in a three-way elimination match ... **Matt Cappotelli** pinned **Maven** ... **Chris Masters** defeated **Steven Richards** ... Intercontinental champion **Shelton Benjamin** defeated **Christian** ... **Muhammad Hassan** beat **Val Venis** ... **Kane** pinned **Viscera** ... **Edge** defeated **Chris Benoit** ... Raw champion **Batista** beat **Ric Flair** & **Triple-H** in a handicap match.
(05-08-05)

—Stanley Allen

NORTH CAROLINA

LEXINGTON—Tarheel Wrestling Entertainment at the National Guard Armory: **Joey Silva** pinned **Trent Wylde** ... **Mike Storm** & **Derek Rave** beat **Rocky Starr** & **Devin Lee** ... **Louis Moore** pinned **Jason Machado** ... **East Coast Bodily Harm** & **L.A. WildOne** defeated **Method 187** & **Paco Loco** ... **Too Hott** beat **Thugged Out Pimps** ... **Jose Sanchez** pinned **Scrap Yard Dog** to win the vacant TV title ... **Ali Steele** & **Tito Rain** beat tag team champions **Damage Inc.** by disqualification ... **Lodi** pinned heavyweight champion **Bone Krusher** to win the title.
(04-30-05)

—Henry Dean

WENTWORTH—CWF/AWA Mid-Atlantic at the National Guard Armory: **Ultra Dragon** & **Matty Dee** defeated **Gregory Vercetti** & **Jay Sinn** ... **Tank Lawson** pinned **Keenan Quinn** ... **Otto Schwanz** pinned **Kid Justice** ... TV champion **Jesse Ortega** defeated **Donnie Dolars** ... **Rob McBride** pinned **Mitch Conner** ... **Corey Edsel** & **Brad Stutts** defeated **Brass Munkey** & **GeeStar** ... **Mikael Yamaha** pinned **American Steel Ninja** ... Tag team champions **J-Money** & **Will B. Smooth** defeated **Garry Stevens** & **The Spoiler**.
(04-30-05)

—Grant Sawyer

HENDERSONVILLE—High Velocity Wrestling at Viper's House of Pain: **Kid Kaos** & **Victorious** beat **Tequila Kid** & **Viscious V** ... **G.L. Low** defeated **Lance Marvel** ... **Jason Jett** beat **Johnny Danger** ... **Steve Cronic** defeated **Rebel Bandit** ... **Leroy Dudley** beat **Johnny Buffett** ... Tag team champs **David Duke** & **Billy Rucker** beat **Viper** & **Jesse Black** ... **Ethan Cage** defeated heavyweight champion **Ken Magnum** in a non-title match.
(04-29-05)

—Bob Griffin

OHIO

NORTH RIDGEVILLE—Mega Championship Wrestling at the VFW Post: **Chris Kole** defeated **Carlton Kaz** ... **Traz** beat **Canadian Bad Boy** ... **Jabari Akeem Mustapha** defeated **Curt Fury** ... **Christian Faith** beat **Spence Slater** ... **Aero** defeated **Virus** ... Brass knuckles champ **Brandon X** defeated **Michael Hellborne** ... Light heavyweight champ **Shawn Blaze** beat **Nick Ritters** in a no-disqualification match ... **The Bouncer** defeated **J.T. Lightning** to win the U.S. title.
(04-30-05)

—Evan Matthews

OKLAHOMA

PONCA CITY—NWA Oklahoma at the National Guard Armory: **Shadow** beat **Scrappy K-9** ... **Kevin Northcutt** beat **Tejas** to win the NWA Southwest heavyweight title ... **John O'Malley** wrestled **Scotty Charisma** to a no-contest ... **Gary Graham** won the NWA Oklahoma X title in a four-way weapons match against **Renegade**, **The Specialist**, and **Dominator** ... **Tim WarCloud** & **Tejas** beat NWA North American tag champs **Kevin Northcutt** & **John Saxon** to win the title.
(04-16-05)

—Lexi Dewitt

PENNSYLVANIA

McKEESPORT—NWA Pro Wrestling Express at the Sportatorium: ***Ray Mendez Memorial Tournament, quarterfinals:*** **Adam Cage** defeated **Jason Cage** by submission ... **Brandon K** pinned **Scott Venom** ... **Scottie Gash** defeated **Devil Bhudakahn** ... **Justin Idol** pinned **Daron Smythe** ... ***Semifinals:*** Gash pinned Idol ... Cage defeated Brandon K ... ***Finals:*** Gash defeated Cage to win the tournament ... ***In non-tournament matches:*** **Jason Cage** beat **Sabotage** by submission to earn a spot in the Mendez Memorial Tournament ... **Bigg**, **Nikita Allanov**, & **The Tri Chi Fraternity** defeated heavyweight champion **Devin Devine**, Three Rivers champion **Chris Taylor**, & tag team champions **Da Munchies** in an elimination match.
(04-30-05)

—Ann McNamara

McKEESPORT—International Wrestling Cartel at the Palisades: ***Super Indy Title Tournament, quarterfinals:*** **John McChesney** pinned **C.M. Punk** ... **Glenn Spectre** beat **Christopher Daniels** by disqualification ... **Homicide** pinned **Shiima Xion** ... **Low-Ki** pinned **Jason Gory** ... ***Semifinals:*** McChesney pinned Spectre ... Low-Ki pinned Homicide ... ***Finals:*** McChesney pinned Low-Ki to win the tournament ... ***Non-tournament matches:*** **Sebastian Dark** & **Hentai** beat **Dean Radford** & **Marshall Gambino** ... Tag team champions **Bobby Eaton** & **Dennis Condrey** beat **Tracey Smothers** & **Chris Hamrick** ... **Justin Idol** beat Super Indy champion **Sterling James Keenan** by countout ... Heavyweight champion **Shirley Doe** pinned **Troy Lords**.
(04-29-05)

—Joe Dombrowski

PITTSTON—CHIKARA at the Staircase: **Larry Sweeney**, **The ShareCropper**, & **Chandler McClure** defeated **Mickie Knuckles**, **Emil Sitoci**, & **Trik Davis** ... **Gran Akuma** defeated **Davey Andrews** ... **Claudio Castagnoli** wrestled to a 15-minute draw with **Shane Storm** ... **Mano Metalico**, **Crossbones**, **Rorschach**, & **Shane Hagadorn** beat **Jolly Roger**, **Lance Steel**, **J.C. Ryder**, & **Danny Rage** ... **Mike Quackenbush** beat **Arik Cannon** ... **Anthony Franco** & **Matt Turner** defeated **Cheech** & **Cloudy** ... Young Lions Cup champion **Jigsaw** defeated **Chris Hero** by disqualification.
(04-17-05)

—Brian Jensen

McKEES ROCKS—Pittsburgh Professional Wrestling at the SJG Gymnasium: **Kevin Grace** pinned **Kid Mikaze** ... **Ethan Price** & **Jake Garrett** beat **Jason Gory** & **Hex Hatred** ... **Sterling James**

Keenan defeated **Brian O** ... **Lord Zoltan** pinned **Rockin' Rebel** ... **Ariel** beat **Hailey Hatred** ... **Powerhouse Hughes** defeated **Sebastian Dark** to win the vacant Pittsburgh Pro title.
(04-16-05)

—Steve Swank

READING—CHIKARA at the Riverside Beneficial Association: **Jolly Roger**, **Lance Steel**, & **Allison Danger** beat **Larry Sweeney**, **The ShareCropper**, & **Rorschach** ... **Niles Young** pinned **Chandler McClure** ... **Gran Akuma** & **Icarus** wrestled to a draw with **Mister ZERO** & **Shane Storm** ... **Davey Andrews** beat **Shane Hagadorn** ... **Sabian** beat **Ravage** ... **Hallowicked** & **Mano Metalico** beat **Emil Sitoci** & **Trik Davis** ... **Chris Hero** beat **Mickie Knuckles** ... **Mike Quackenbush** & **Jigsaw** beat **Arik Cannon** & **Claudio Castagnoli**.
(04-15-05)

—Brian Jensen

SOUTH CAROLINA

SPARTANBURG—American Pro Wrestling at the American Coliseum: **Ricky Storm** beat **Scottie Brooks** ... **Rowdy James** & **Zach Salvation** beat **Ice Pick** & **Wolfman** ... **Jimmy Kindred** pinned **Kid Kaos** ... **Doug Hawkins** & **Bill White** beat **Sonny Landel** & **Tommy Gibson** ... **Mark Slain** wrestled **Mickey Richards** to a double-countout ... Carolinas champ **Sir Jonathan Buffett** beat **Chief Jay Eagle** by disqualification ... **Neil Nitro** beat **David Duke** ... **Shane Austin**, **Boomer Payne**, & **Nick Fury** beat **Armageddon** & **Rev. Slim** ... U.S. champion **Kirk Prodigy** beat **The Assassin** ... **Viper** & **Billy Rucker** beat tag champs **Ken Magnum** & **Brian Linder** to win the title ... **A.J. Frost** won a three-way match against **Dirty** and **Jesse Black**.
(04-30-05)

—Myron Williams

TENNESSEE

KINGSPORT—Championship Wrestling at the National Guard Armory: **Josh Cody** defeated **Tony Givens** ... U.S. junior heavyweight champion **Clay Connors** defeated **Dan Marrow** ... **Nick Hammonds** & **Wayne Adkins** defeated **Matt Scott** & **The Freak** ... TV champion **Thorn** wrestled **Adam York** to a double-countout ... **Dr. Tom Prichard** defeated National champion **Alyx Winters** to win the title ... **Tony Givens**, **Robbie Cassidy**, & **Danny Ray** defeated **Beau James**, **Super Destroyer**, & **Josh Cody** in a loser-leaves-town "War Games" cage match.
(04-23-05)

—Fay Ferguson

KINGSPORT—Southern States Wrestling at the National Guard Armory: **Wayne Adkins** beat **Ryan Comptan** ... **Tony Givens** wrestled **Josh Cody** to a draw ... **Atkins** & **Nick Hammonds** beat **Nightmare** & **Dan Morrow** ... **Super Destroyer** beat **Robbie Cassidy** ... Heavyweight champ **Danny Ray** & U.S. junior heavyweight champ **Clay Connors** beat **Beau James** & **Dr. Tom Prichard**.
(04-22-05)

—Fay Ferguson

TRENTON—NWA Mid-South Wrestling at Peabody High School: **Jo Nathan** defeated **D.C. Biggs** ... **Bill Dundee** beat **Doug Gilbert** by disqualification ... **Psycho** beat **Wildside** ... Junior heavyweight champ **Blaze** beat **Jo Nathan** in a ladder match ... **Big Ron** & **Tank Turner** defeated **Jazz** & **Ice** ... **Ricky Murdock** beat NWA Mid-South champ **Big Nasty Bill** in a steel cage match to win the title.
(04-18-05)

—Alvin Minnick

TEXAS

ARLINGTON—Professional Championship Wrestling at the PCW Arena: **Young Pioneer Cub** beat **Isaiah** by disqualification ... **Jack Dalton** pinned **Chris Richter** ... **Brett Anthony** and **B.J. Turner** wrestled to a no-contest ... **Steve DeMarco** beat **Mike Foxx** ... **Stephen Murphy** won a six-way ladder match against cruiserweight champ **G-Slice**, **Robert Evans**, **James Johnson**, **J.T. LaMotta**, and **Claudia** to win the title ... Heavyweight champion **Shadow** beat **Chris Stevens**.
(04-30-05)

—Rob Moore

PORT NECHES—Gulf Coast Power Pro Wrestling at the National Guard Armory: **Jarred Steele** wrestled **ZenZen** to a time-limit draw ... **Shawn Stern** defeated **Pharroh Hydra** ... **The Fu Man Kru** beat **Spector** & **Nayati** ... **Chris James** pinned **Rocco Carmanooch** ... **Max Muscles** beat **Mr. Entertainment** ... **Steven Cody** beat **Major Pest** by countout.
(04-30-05)

—Kelvin Montero

DENTON—XCW at the XCW Arena: **Eddie Atlas** defeated **Jacob Ladder**, **Dusty Wolfe**, and **Bull** in a strap match ... **Al Jackson** beat **Jack Drastic**, **Sidd Murder**, and **Spudz McKenzie** in a ladder match ... **Action Jackson** defeated **Manny Fernandez**, **Gemini**, and **Ricky Jackson** in a tables match ... **Drunk Adam** beat **Kit Carson**, **Hugh Rogue**, and **Dave the Rave** in a barbed-wire match ... **Drunk Adam** beat **Eddie Atlas**, **Action Jackson**, and **Al Jackson** in a cage match.
(04-29-05)

—Matt Avery

PEARLAND—Wild Southern Wrestling at the VFW Hall: **Don Juan** & **Chris Marvel** defeated **Justin Blaze** & **Kris Kronie** ... **Major Pest** pinned **Rocco Carmanooch** ... **Max Muscles** pinned **ZenZen** ... **The Fu Man Kru** beat **The Pipeline X-Press** ... **Jared Steele** & **Major Pest** won a three-way tag team match against **The Fu Man Kru** and **Don Juan** & **Chris Marvel**.
(04-29-05)

—Mary Girard

SAN ANTONIO—Texas Wrestling Entertainment at the Trishway Event Center: **Vicki** defeated **Martin Styles** ... **Rudy Russo** defeated **Nayati Mattox** ... **Darin Childs** pinned **Quinton Allen** ... **Joey Spector** beat **Big Dogg** by disqualification ... TV champ **Martin Styles** defeated **Jacob Ladder** ... **The Great Kazushi** defeated **Mike Dell**.
(04-20-05)

—Nick Barrett

VIRGINIA

RICHMOND—NWA Virginia at the Blackwell Community Center: **Bad News Johnson** pinned **The Painmaster** ... **Prince Malik** & **Shaka** beat **Pete Jannings** & **Jon Jon Phenom** ... **Logan Knight** beat **Mike Vaughn** ... **Elements of Destruction** beat **Maxx Dynamite** & **Sean Callaway** ... **Drake Tungsten** pinned **Tommy Smalls** ... **The Old School Empire** beat NWA Virginia State tag team champs **Scotty Blaze** & **Pharaoh** for the title ... Virginia State champ **Damian Wayne** beat **Chris Dramin** ... **Lexie Fyfe** beat NWA women's champ **Kiley McLean** in a no-disqualification match to win the title.
(04-23-05)

—Bettie Jo Pappa

Shawn Michaels more than held his own against Muhammad Hassan one-on-one. Later, when Daivari got involved, he had troubles. Good thing Hulk Hogan was in the house.

Simon Dean almost helped Shelton Benjamin drop a little weight around his midsection in a flash. But Benjamin wasn't quite ready to part with that Intercontinental belt.

ROANOKE—ACW/NAW at Jackson Middle School: Dustin Storm defeated **Eclipso** ... **Joe Powers Jr.** beat **The Spoiler** to win the ACW TV title ... **The Unknown Soldier** & **Scott Weddle** defeated **Hunter Guerrero** & **Baja Elgranda Jr.** ... **Matty Dee** wrestled to a double-countout with **Rick Kelly** ... **Eclipso** beat **Eddie Loco** for the ACW universal title ... **Scotty Rocker** defeated **Mike Williams** by disqualification ... **The Bunkhouse Boys** defeated **Big Money** to win the ACW and the NAW tag team titles.
(04-09-05)

—Rob Amos

WEST VIRGINIA

ATHENS—Mountain State Wrestling at Concord College: **Chris Gilbert** beat **Super Destroyer** ... **Big Bad John** beat **Eric Steel** ... **Beau James, Scotty McKeever,** & **Roger Hamm** beat **T.J. Phillips, Eric Darkstorm,** & **Jason Kincaid** ... **Lance Erikson** beat **Brad Thomas** ... **George South** & **Eric St. Clair** beat **Cuban Assassin** & **Dan Richards** ... **Rick Morton** beat **Dr. Tom Prichard.**
(04-26-05)

—Fay Ferguson

NITRO—Xtreme Maximum Championship at the Community Center: **El Fandango** beat **Zac Vincent** ... **Chad Cross** beat **Phil Anderson** ... **Booty X** defeated **Nina** in a women' s table match ... **The Lynch Boys** beat **T-Bone** & **Devin** by disqualification ... **Rated X** beat **Projekt Ego** in a TLC match to win the tag team title ... **The Unholy** defeated **Death Falcon Zero** to capture the hardcore title in a last-man-standing match ... Heavyweight champ **Mister X** defeated **Raw Talent** in a fans-bring-the-weapons match ... Heavyweight champ **Shane Storm** won an "Ultimate X" match against **Kris King** and **Chance Prophet.**
(04-23-05)

—Monty Combs

WISCONSIN

BATAVIA—Powerhouse Pro Wrestling at the Scott Community Center: **Lumberjack Ted** beat **Steve Storm** ... **Baby Haystacks** defeated **Iraqi Nightmare** ... **Krazy Gorman** beat **The Stalker** ... **Ninja Assassin I, Ninja Assassin II,** & **Jazon Parrxz** beat **The Stryker Brothers** & **Money Mike** ... **Funky C** beat **Jazon Parrxz** ... **Baby Haystacks, Cooter,** & **Bruce Allen** beat **Lt. Mack, Lt. Harris,** & **B.J. Van Buren** ... **Sgt. Hayze** beat **American Ninja** ... **Lt. Mack** beat **Blue Jabroni** to win the heavyweight title ... **Jesse Weaver** won a four-corners match against **Justin Sane, Steve Storm,** and **Funky C.**
(04-30-05)

—Nicholas Loken

BLOOMER—World Wrestling Association at the Badger Hole: **Ace of Heartz** wrestled **Ian Xavier** to a draw ... **Slaughterhouse Sam** beat **Cooter** ... **Jason Studd** & **Zakk Neo** beat **Sledge** & **Cameron Steele** ... **Gator McGraw** beat **Casanova** ... **Ben Sailor** beat **Jose Guavara** ... **Rain** beat **Lacey** ... **Mad Wolverine** won a triple threat match against **Ace of Heartz** and **Ian Xavier.**
(04-29-05)

—Nicholas Loken

MILWAUKEE—Xtreme Wrestling Alliance at the XWA Arena: Heavyweight champion **Juicy Johnny** defeated **Nick Davis** ... **Grave Digger** beat **Red Rage** ... Tag team champions **The Texas Terrors** defeated **Huntsville Heat** ... **The Geeks** beat **Rising Sun** ... U.S. champion **Kid USA** beat **Ronnie Rude** in a first-blood match ... **Steve Taylor** defeated **Sick McKain** ... **Grave Digger** won a 17-man battle royal.
(04-16-05)

—Bill Powell

INTERNATIONAL

AUSTRALIA

ADELAIDE—WWE at the Entertainment Centre: **Charlie Haas** & **Hardcore Holly** defeated **The Basham Brothers** ... Cruiserweight champion **Paul London** beat **Scotty Too Hotty, Spike Dudley,** and **Funaki** in a four-way match ... **Rene Dupree** pinned **Mark Jindrak** ... Smackdown tag team champions **Eddie Guerrero** & **Rey Misterio Jr.** beat **Kurt Angle** & **Luther Reigns** ... **Torrie Wilson** pinned **Dawn Marie** ... **Booker T** beat **Heidenreich** ... **The Big Show** & **John Cena** beat **John Bradshaw Layfield** & **Orlando Jordan.**
(04-10-05)

—Adam Lehman

PERTH—WWE at the Burswood Dome: Cruiserweight champion **Paul London** defeated **Funaki, Spike Dudley,** and **Scotty Too Hotty** in a four-way match ... **Booker T** pinned **Heidenreich** ... **Torrie Wilson** defeated **Dawn Marie** ... **Hardcore Holly** beat **Luther Reigns** ... **The Big Show** defeated **Kurt Angle** in a no-disqualification match ... Smackdown tag team champions **Eddie Guerrero** & **Rey Misterio Jr.** beat **The Basham Brothers** ... **Rene Dupree** pinned **Charlie Haas** ... Smackdown champion **John Cena** beat **John Bradshaw Layfield.**
(04-09-05)

—Annie Jessup

SYDNEY—WWE at the SuperDome: Raw tag team champions **William Regal** & **Tajiri** beat **Robert Conway** & **Sylvan Grenier** ... **Tyson Tomko** defeated **The Hurricane** ... **Chris Masters** beat **Val Venis** ... **Victoria** beat **Molly Holly** ... Intercontinental champion **Shelton Benjamin** pinned **Christian** ... **Muhammad Hassan** defeated **Chris Jericho** ... **Kane** pinned **Edge** ... **Chris Benoit** & **Batista** beat **Triple-H** & **Ric Flair.**
(04-09-05)

—Jason Conlan

MELBOURNE—WWE at Rod Laver Arena: **Rey Misterio Jr.** pinned **Eddie Guerrero** ... **Heidenreich** defeated **Hardcore Holly** ... **The Basham Brothers** beat **Scotty Too Hotty** & **Funaki** ... **Mark Jindrak** defeated **Luther Reigns** by disqualification ... **Booker T** pinned **Kurt Angle** ... **Rene Dupree** pinned **Charlie Haas** ... Cruiserweight champion **Paul London** pinned **Spike Dudley** ... **The Big Show** & **John Cena** defeated **John Bradshaw Layfield** & **Orlando Jordan.**
(04-08-05)

—Charles Fuller

NEWCASTLE—WWE at the Entertainment Centre: **Kane** defeated **Tyson Tomko** & **Christian** in a handicap match ... **Chris Masters** beat **The Hurricane** ... **Muhammad Hassan** defeated **Val Venis** ... **Victoria** pinned **Molly Holly** ... Raw tag team champions **William Regal** & **Tajiri** defeated **Robert Conway** & **Sylvan Grenier** ... Intercontinental champion **Shelton Benjamin** pinned **Gene Snitsky** ... **Chris Benoit, Chris Jericho,** & **Batista** defeated **Triple-H, Ric Flair,** & **Edge.**
(04-08-05)

—Ralph Rogers

BRISBANE—WWE at the Entertainment Centre: Raw tag team champions **William Regal** & **Tajiri** beat **Robert Conway** & **Sylvan Grenier** ... **Chris Masters** defeated **The Hurricane** ... **Christian** pinned **Val Venis** ... **Victoria** pinned **Molly Holly** ... Intercontinental champion **Shelton Benjamin** beat **Gene Snitsky** ... **Kane** pinned **Edge** ... **Muhammad Hassan** beat **Chris Jericho** ... **Chris Benoit** & **Batista** beat **Triple-H** & **Ric Flair.**
(04-07-05)

—Jason Conlan

CANADA

VANCOUVER, BRITISH COLUMBIA—NWA/ECCW at the Croatian Cultural Centre: ***In Pacific Cup Tournament matches, semifinals:*** **Puma** pinned **Dave Richards** ... **Aaron Idol** beat **J.J. Perez** ... **American Dragon** defeated **Black Dragon** ... ***Finals:*** Idol won a three-way match against Puma and Dragon to win the ***tournament*** ... ***In non-tournament matches:*** **Mike Dempsey** pinned **Nate Daniels** ... **Jesse Jimenez** beat **Tony Tisoy** ... **Freddy Funk** defeated **Derek Sanders** ... **Matt Borne, Abbadon,** & **Juggernaut** beat **Seth Knight, Machette Brown,** & **Ladies Choice.**
(04-23-05)

—Lisa Orlando

SURREY, BRITISH COLUMBIA—NWA/ECCW at Bridgeview Hall: ***In Pacific Cup Tournament matches, quarterfinals:*** **Dave Richards** beat **T. Kasaki** ... **Puma** defeated **Jesse Jimenez** ... **J.J. Perez** defeated **MR2** ... **Aaron Idol** beat **Memphis Raines** ... **Black Dragon** beat **Scotty Mac** ... **American Dragon** defeated **Chance Beckett** ... ***In non-tournament matches:*** NWA Canadian junior heavyweight champion **Dropkick Murphy** beat **Derek Sanders** ... NWA/ECCW heavyweight champ **Juggernaut** beat **Matt Borne.**
(04-22-05)

—Gerard Nagle

HALIFAX, NOVA SCOTIA—Mainstream Wrestling

at the Dome: Heavyweight champion **Marco Estrada** & **Aurora** beat **Mark Manson** & **Miss Chevius** in a mixed tag team match. ... **Jason Holiday** beat **Tony Armstrong** ... **Julian Spacek** battled **Hypirio** to a no-contest ... **Sonny Roselli** beat **C.N. Power** ... Atlantic Canadian champion **Kyle Kruze** beat **Outcast** ... **C.N. Power** won a battle royal ... **Honky Tonk Man** beat **Vance Nevada**.
(04-21-05)

—Malcolm Brown

OLDCASTLE, ONTARIO—Border City Wrestling at Hellenic Banquet Halls: **Phil Atlas** & **Jimmy Jacobs** beat **Geza Kalman Jr.** & **Johnny Bravo** ... **J.T. Playa** pinned **Cody Steele** ... **Eddie Venom** defeated **Jon Bolen** ... Tag champs **N8 Mattson** & **Danny Daniels** beat **Tyson Dux** & **Gutter** ... **Petey Williams** won a fatal four-way against **El Reverso**, **Josh Abercrombie**, and **Derek Wylde** ... **Brad Martin** pinned **Conrad Kennedy III** ... TV champion **Chris Sabin** wrestled **Amazing Red** to a no-contest ... **Kris Chambers** & **Shantelle** beat **Alex Shelley** & **Jaime D** ... **Sean Waltman** & **Scott D'Amore** defeated **Joe Doering** & heavyweight champion **A-1**.
(04-15-05)

—Holly Lengyel

ENGLAND

NOTTINGHAM—WWE at the Nottingham Arena: Raw tag team champions **William Regal** & **Tajiri** beat **Robert Conway** & **Sylvan Grenier** ... **Chris Masters** defeated **The Hurricane** ... **Viscera** pinned **Val Venis** ... **Christy Hemme** beat **Victoria** ... **Shawn Michaels** & **Batista** defeated **Triple-H** & **Ric Flair** ... Intercontinental champion **Shelton Benjamin** pinned **Christian** ... **Kane** beat **Muhammad Hassan** by disqualification ... **Chris Benoit** defeated **Edge**.
(04-26-05)

—Dominick Valenti

HULL—WWE at the Hull Arena: Raw tag team champions **William Regal** & **Tajiri** defeated **Christian** & **Tyson Tomko** ... **Chris Masters** defeated **Val Venis** ... **Christy Hemme** pinned **Victoria** ... **Viscera** beat **The Hurricane** ... **Chris Benoit** beat **Robert Conway** ... Intercontinental champion **Shelton Benjamin** pinned **Chris Jericho** ... **Kane** pinned **Edge** ... **Shawn Michaels** pinned **Muhammad Hassan** ... Raw champion **Batista** defeated **Ric Flair** & **Triple-H** in a handicap match.
(04-24-05)

—Matt Brock

NEWCASTLE—WWE at the Metro Radio Arena: Raw tag team champions **William Regal** & **Tajiri** beat **Robert Conway** & **Sylvan Grenier** ... **Chris Masters** beat **The Hurricane** ... **Christy Hemme** defeated **Victoria** ... **Viscera** pinned **Val Venis** ... **Chris Jericho** defeated **Tyson Tomko** ... **Kane** defeated **Muhammad Hassan** by disqualification ... Intercontinental champion **Shelton Benjamin** pinned **Christian** ... **Edge** defeated **Chris Benoit** ... **Batista** & **Shawn Michaels** defeated **Triple-H** & **Ric Flair**.
(04-23-05)

—Edward Furman

LONDON—WWE at the ExCel Convention Centre: **Rene Dupree** defeated **Mark Jindrak** ... **Paul London** won a cruiserweight battle royal ... **Torrie Wilson** pinned **Dawn Marie** ... **The Basham Brothers** defeated **Charlie Haas** & **Hardcore Holly** ... **Booker T** beat **Heidenreich** ... **The Big Show** & **John Cena** beat **Orlando Jordan** & **John Bradshaw Layfield** ... Smackdown tag team champions **Joey Mercury** & **Johnny Nitro** defeated **Eddie Guerrero** & **Rey Misterio Jr.** ... **Carlito Caribbean Cool** beat **Scotty Too Hotty** ... **The Undertaker** pinned **Kurt Angle**.
(04-22-05)

—Jamie Marist

GERMANY

BERLIN—WWE at Max Schmeling Halle: Raw tag team champions **William Regal** & **Tajiri** defeated **Robert Conway** & **Sylvan Grenier** ... **Chris Masters** defeated **The Hurricane** ... **Christy Hemme** pinned **Victoria** ... **Viscera** pinned **Val Venis** ... **Chris Benoit** beat **Tyson Tomko** ... Intercontinental champion **Shelton Benjamin** defeated **Chris Jericho** and **Christian** in a three-way match ... **Kane** pinned **Edge** ... **Shawn Michaels** defeated **Muhammad Hassan** ... Raw champion **Batista** defeated **Ric Flair** & **Triple-H** in a handicap match.
(04-20-05)

—Tomas Bermann

IRELAND

DUBLIN—WWE at the Point Arena: **Hardcore Holly** beat **Rene Dupree** ... **Paul London** won a 10-man cruiserweight battle royal ... **Luther Reigns** pinned **Charlie Haas** ... **Booker T** beat **Heidenreich** ... **The Big Show** & **John Cena** defeated **Kurt Angle** & **John Bradshaw Layfield** ... Smackdown tag team champions **Joey Mercury** & **Johnny Nitro** beat **Eddie Guerrero** & **Rey Misterio Jr.** ... **Carlito Caribbean Cool** beat **Mark Jindrak** ... **Torrie Wilson** beat **Dawn Marie** ... **The Undertaker** beat U.S. champion **Orlando Jordan** by disqualification.
(04-21-05)

—Wilson Grady

ITALY

BOLOGNA—WWE at Pallamalaguti: **Nunzio** defeated **Rene Dupree** ... **Paul London** won a cruiserweight battle royal ... **Carlito Caribbean Cool** defeated **Mark Jindrak** ... **The Undertaker** pinned **Heidenreich** ... Smackdown tag team champions **Joey Mercury** & **Johnny Nitro** beat **Eddie Guerrero** & **Rey Misterio Jr.** ... **The Basham Brothers** defeated **Charlie Haas** & **Hardcore Holly** ... **Booker T** defeated **Kurt Angle** ... **The Big Show** & **John Cena** defeated **Orlando Jordan** & **John Bradshaw Layfield**.
(04-23-05)

—Dominick Valenti

SCOTLAND

EDINBURGH—WWE at the Royal Highland Centre: Raw tag team champions **William Regal** & **Tajiri** beat **Robert Conway** & **Sylvan Grenier** ... **Chris Masters** defeated **The Hurricane** ... **Christy Hemme** pinned **Victoria** ... **Viscera** pinned **Val Venis** ... **Chris Benoit** beat **Tyson Tomko** ... Intercontinental champion **Shelton Benjamin** beat **Chris Jericho** and **Christian** in a three-way match ... **Kane** pinned **Edge** ... **Shawn Michaels** defeated **Muhammad Hassan** ... Raw champion **Batista** defeated **Triple-H** & **Ric Flair** in a handicap match.
(04-22-05)

—Matt Brock

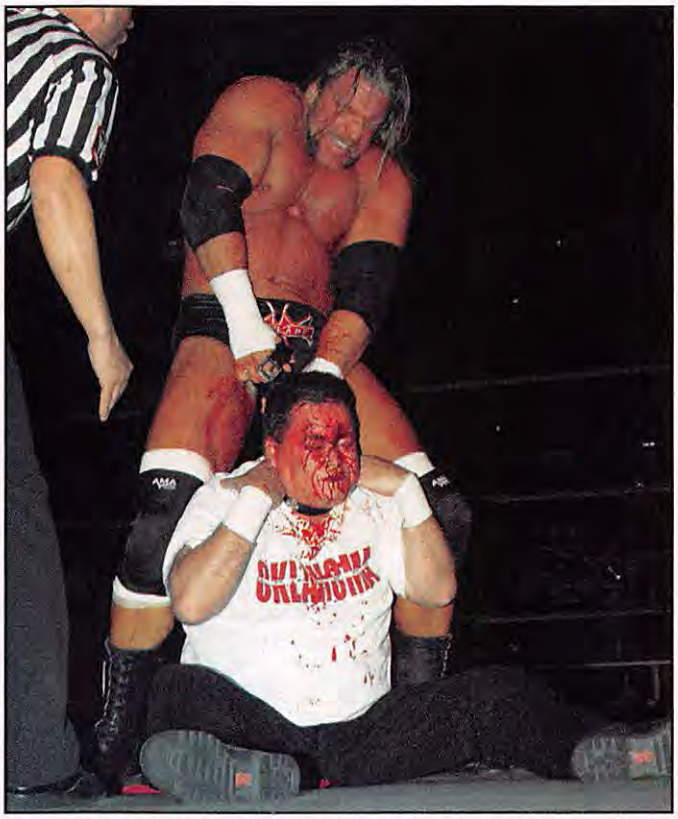
ABERDEEN—WWE at the Press & Journal Arena: Raw tag team champions **William Regal** & **Tajiri** defeated **Robert Conway** & **Sylvan Grenier** ... **Chris Masters** beat **Val Venis** ... **Christy Hemme** defeated **Victoria** ... **Viscera** pinned **The Hurricane** ... **Chris Jericho** defeated **Tyson Tomko** ... **Kane** defeated **Muhammad Hassan** by disqualification ... Intercontinental champion **Shelton Benjamin** pinned **Christian** ... **Edge** defeated **Chris Benoit** ... **Batista** & **Shawn Michaels** beat **Ric Flair** & **Triple-H**.
(04-21-05)

—Bryan Peterson

WALES

CARDIFF—WWE at the International Arena: **Paul London** won a cruiserweight battle royal ... **Rene Dupree** defeated **Funaki** ... **Charlie Haas** & **Hardcore Holly** beat **The Basham Brothers** ... **Carlito Caribbean Cool** beat **Mark Jindrak** ... **The Undertaker** pinned **Kurt Angle** ... Smackdown tag team champions **Joey Mercury** & **Johnny Nitro** defeated **Eddie Guerrero** & **Rey Misterio Jr.** ... **Booker T** pinned **Heidenreich** ... **The Big Show** & **John Cena** beat **John Bradshaw Layfield** & **Orlando Jordan**.
(04-25-05)

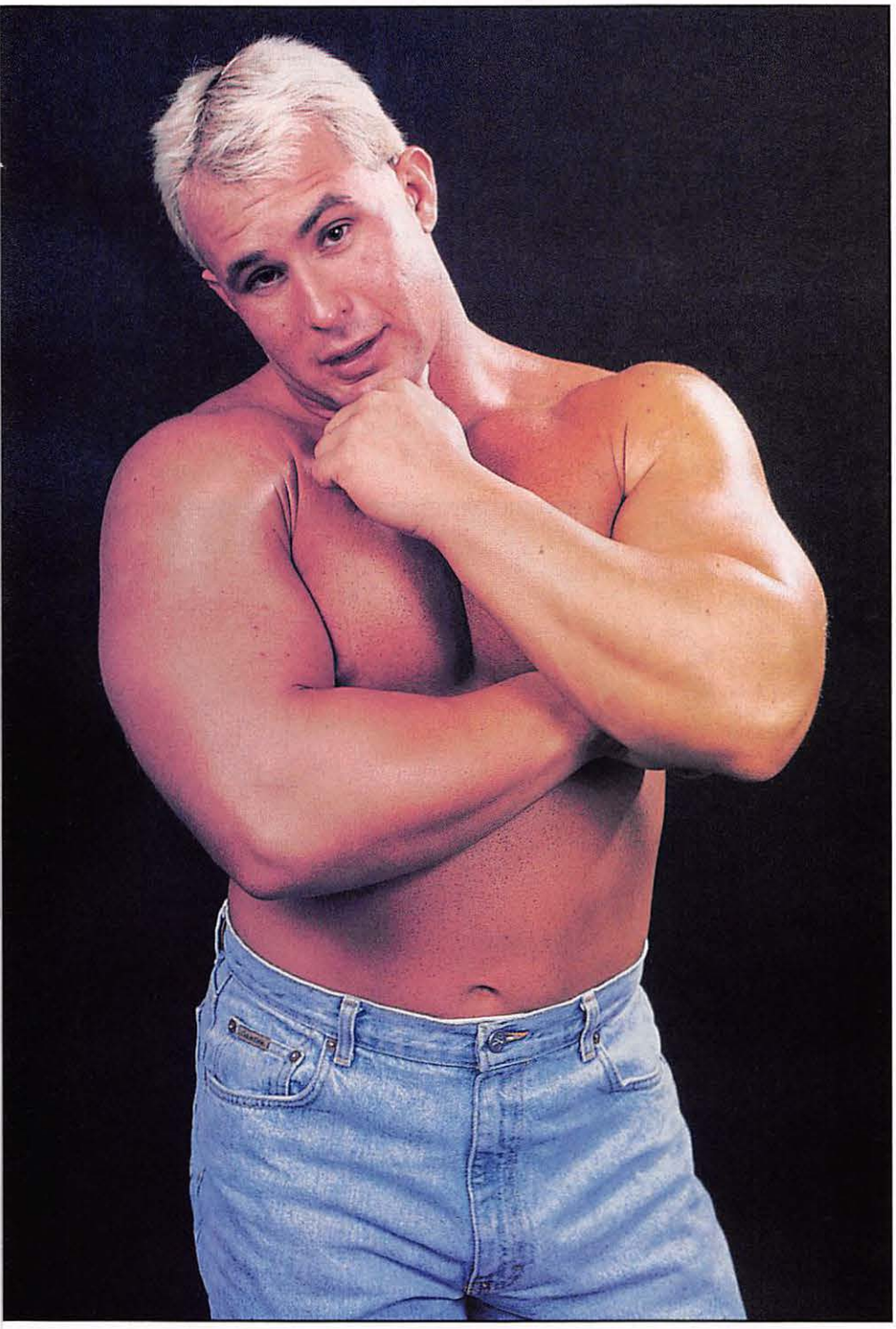
—Matt Brock



Do we really need to see Triple-H carve up the face of good ol' J.R. as the main event of *Raw*? "The Game" thought so. Batista, however, didn't much care for the carnage.

PWI classic

From the February 1997 issue of *Inside Wrestling*



"BODYDONNA" CHRIS CANDIDO: He's Lost Direction, But He Knows Where He's Headed!

Is he Skip or just Chris Candido? Does he long for a full-time reunion with Sunny or want to go on his own in the independents? These are confusing times for this former Bodydonna, but he thinks everything will turn out fine

By Bryan Ethier

CHRIS CANDIDO, A.K.A. Bodydonna Skip, unfolded the crumpled map on his lap and tried to determine where he was.

I think I know where I'm going, he reassured himself.

He'd been rambling down I-95 for two hours, headed toward southern Pennsylvania. He was searching for a town called Destiny, but he couldn't find it on his map.

Chris "Skip" Candido knew he could succeed against top WWF stars like Ahmed Johnson (above) and even legends like Terry Funk (right). He just wasn't sure where his post-WWF career would take him in 1997.

That town called Destiny seemed to have vanished from his AAA map and personal reality.

He popped in *Kiss Alive* and began tapping his fingers to "Detroit Rock City."

"You're gonna lose your mind in Detroit Rock City" ... Candido hummed.

Have I lost a little bit of my mind, he wondered as he headed southwest to his future.

"Where *am* I going?" he muttered.

The open road gives a person time to think, plan, look backward, forward. Candido seemed to be looking in all directions at one time. He popped open a can of Coke and looked in the mirror—no one behind him. The road ahead was dotted with slow-moving vehicles that repeatedly got in his way.

Just like my wrestling career, he mused sourly. *Always someone or something getting in my way.*

His career was like this circuitous journey to some undetermined outpost. His destiny? It was like an exit that had been eliminated by some wise-guy highway worker who liked to steal road signs.

I was NWA champion, he told himself. *I was a WWF tag team champion,* he argued, trying to sell himself *to* himself. But if there was one thing Chris Candido didn't need, it was a sales job. He knew he was arguably the most underrated technical grappler in the WWF. Candido also knew that as a businessman, he was as lost as he was on this road, which seemed to lead to nowhere.

I'm not worried, he told himself. *I always find my way.*

His thoughts turned to Sunny, his confidante, friend, and manager for much of his career; she managed him and Zip to that WWF tag team title. But Sunny, like all successful businesspeople, knew when to buy and sell her commodities. She formed The Bodydonnas when they were promising and dumped them after they had relinquished the tag team title to the Godwinns.

Candido fast-forwarded the tape to his personal rock anthem, "Rock And Roll All Night." The song still electrified him. It proved that the tandem of Gene Simmons and Paul Stanley could keep this modestly talented group alive and thriving for a quarter-century.

It told Candido he would always have a shot at gold belts, even when he was 50. But what was he to do now that he was out of the WWF?

Should I seek Sunny's help again? he pondered. *What would Gene and Paul do?*

Candido zipped in and out of lanes, snaking past a string of cars that couldn't get out of third gear. Similarly, he had to get his career out of third gear. He *had* to.

Inside Wrestling ratings

February 1997

WWF

World champion: Sid Vicious

1. Hunter Hearst Helmsley
2. Shawn Michaels
3. Bret Hart
4. Steve Austin
5. The Undertaker
6. Faarooq
7. Marc Mero
8. Vader
9. Mankind
10. The Sultan

WCW

World champion: Hulk Hogan

1. Lex Luger
2. Dean Malenko
3. The Giant
4. Jeff Jarrett
5. Lord Steven Regal
6. Sting
7. Rey Misterio Jr.
8. Chris Benoit
9. Randy Savage
10. Dallas Page

TAG TEAMS

1. Owen Hart & Davey Boy Smith
2. Scott Hall & Kevin Nash
3. Harlem Heat
4. Henry & Phineas Godwinn
5. The Nasty Boys
6. The Gangstas
7. The Eliminators
8. Marcus Bagwell & Scotty Riggs
9. The Barbarian & Meng
10. Bill & Jamie Dundee

MOST POPULAR

1. Bret Hart
2. Lex Luger
3. Sid Vicious
4. The Undertaker
5. Randy Savage
6. Shawn Michaels
7. Rey Misterio Jr.
8. Marc Mero
9. Jake Roberts
10. The Sandman

MOST HATED

1. Hulk Hogan
2. Steve Austin
3. Scott Hall
4. Kevin Nash
5. The Giant
6. Hunter Hearst Helmsley
7. Faarooq
8. Jerry Lawler
9. Mankind
10. Syxx

Tammy Sytch was there with Candido when he won the NWA title and when he had his greatest success in the WWF, yet her track record as a manager left him wondering if he could fully trust her to guide his career again.

As a wrestler, he was on his own, as he was alone on this highway. He glanced at the map again. He felt his heart jump in his throat. He saw the town for which he was looking. Down the winding road some 60 miles.

He was getting there ... slowly, surely. He smiled. It would turn out okay.

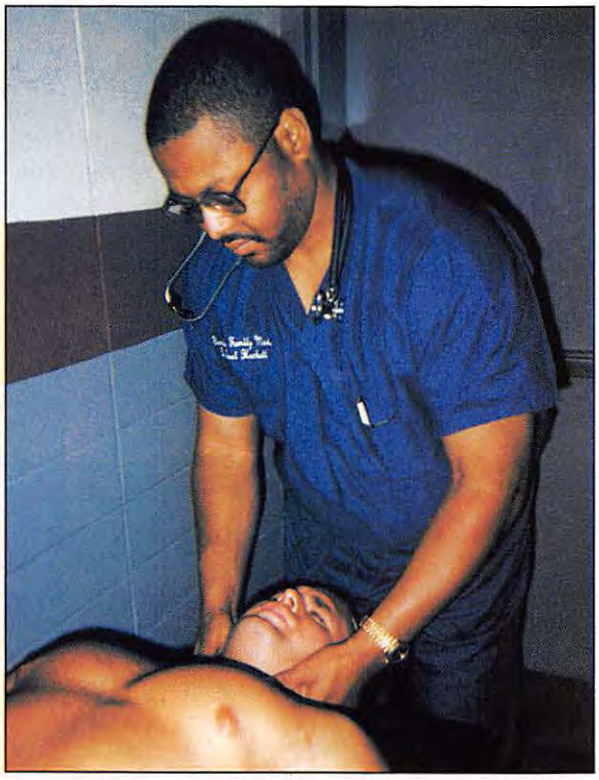
Candido lowered the blaring stereo as he approached more cars. He jerked his car to the left and began to pass a gold Lexus. Candido craned his neck to peer at the driver. A petite blonde, barely tall enough to see over the dashboard, smiled back at him. Her lips were cherry-red, her smile puckish and sarcastic. Her eyes seemed to laugh at him.

Candido felt his stomach quiver; he looked away and raced off.

If that wasn't Sunny's double, I don't know who is.

He turned off the stereo, concentrated on the road before him.

The blonde in the Lexus had pushed his buttons. The thought of Sunny had filled him with anger. Not only had she bolted on him just when he was building



Candido's neck injury was just one of many setbacks he was having to deal with eight years ago. His heart didn't seem to be into wrestling in the WWF when he recovered, and he opted to seek a fresh start elsewhere ... somewhere.

toward a brilliant future, she had mocked him.

"Skip's not sure if he wants to wrestle as a singles competitor, try to get The Bodydonnas back together, or find a new partner, or what," she had said. "We had a good run together, and there are no hard feelings on my part. He just needed someone to talk to, and I'm a real good listener, you know."

Sunny, a good listener? Yeah, and I'm a great sumo wrestler.

Candido shoved the images of Sunny and her facsimile from his mind.

The road ahead was clear now. His thoughts were less jumbled. A long drive can give a man focus.

There would be no reincarnation of The Bodydonnas, he told himself. Why rehash the past? A new tag team partner? Perhaps. But who? Kiss always had balance between Gene and Paul. Similarly, Candido knew he needed a partner who was his athletic and emotional equal. He wouldn't rush his search.

That left him alone, to fight singles matches ... in ECW and maybe Japan.

Just me and my personal demons, the way it was meant to be.

It wasn't exactly a game plan, but as I-95 slowly led him to his destination, Candido knew that if he kept his wits, he would arrive at that town called Destiny.

His trip was almost over, as was *Kiss Alive.*

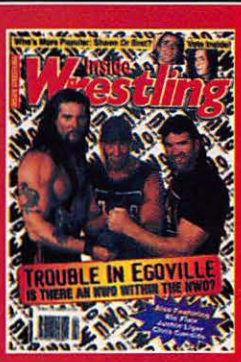
Candido pulled out the tape and replaced it with a Led Zeppelin classic, *The Song Remains The Same.*

The song ***did*** *remain the same,* Candido considered. *If you were talented and confident, you eventually cradled a gold belt in your hands.* Candido had done so. He would do so again.

As the sounds of Zeppelin blared in his ears, Candido saw the exit for which he'd been waiting. He headed off the highway to a place that two hours ago did not seem to exist.

But two hours ago, Chris Candido was merely Skip, ex-Bodydonnas anchor, in search of himself. □

Inside Wrestling, February 1997

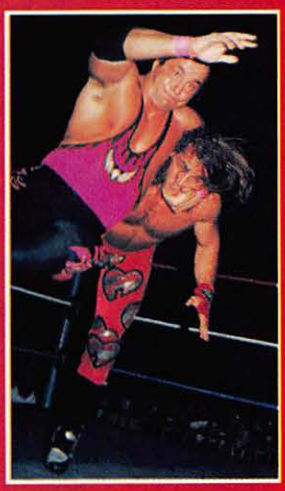


The cover: "Egoville" is how we referred to the New World Order, and we believed trouble was setting up camp there. And our suggestion that egomaniac Hulk Hogan wouldn't be able to peacefully co-exist with egomaniacs Scott Hall and Kevin Nash wasn't "a load of crap," as Hogan told us. Although the group would rule WCW for a while, the inevitable split did happen. The NWO splintered into NWO Hollywood and NWO Wolfpac, and despite numerous attempts to get the band back together as a whole, things were never quite the same again.

Please Don't Go: Ric Flair has rarely been known for being selfless, but he stood up for his WCW brethren in a big way during the NWO invasion. Flair's doctors advised him to have shoulder surgery after an NWO attack aggravated a previous injury. The problem with that was that the surgery would keep him out at least three months, and WCW desperately needed his leadership. So he took the other wrestlers' pleas not to bail out on them seriously and vowed to stand up to the NWO as best and as long as he could.

The Ol' World Title Debate: For the longest time, the good folks of ECW practically begged *PWI* to recognize their heavyweight title as a world title. We didn't do it until ECW reached a deal with TNN in 1999. More than two years earlier, we let broadcaster Joey Styles plead his case as we interviewed him in "Hotseat." He made some decent points about how often and where the title was defended, but we weren't convinced. Of course, he also said he liked ECW's chances of someday becoming more successful than the WWF.

Strange Request: Why would a man who had just spent months recovering from brain surgery ask a man like Chris Benoit to cripple him in his first match back? Jushin Liger is no masochist. He just wanted to make sure Benoit wouldn't go easy on him in his comeback match. So he challenged "The Crippler" in a strange way. It worked. The match was great and full of high-impact moves. And Liger showed he was back to normal by winning with a bone-crushing suplex.



No Good Answer: The rivalry between Bret Hart and Shawn Michaels in the mid-to-late-1990s was one of the most personal we've ever seen. The strange thing about it was that there was no clear fan favorite. Both men had their share of passionate fans. But these two just couldn't get along. So we asked our readers to fill out a form and tell us which man was more popular. The results: About 80 percent voted for HBK ... though we strongly suspected that *someone* stuffed the ballot box.

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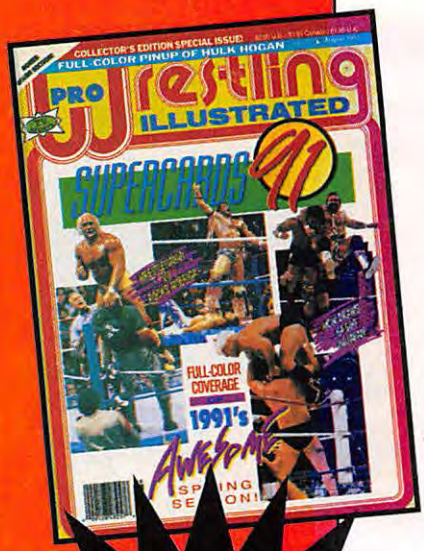

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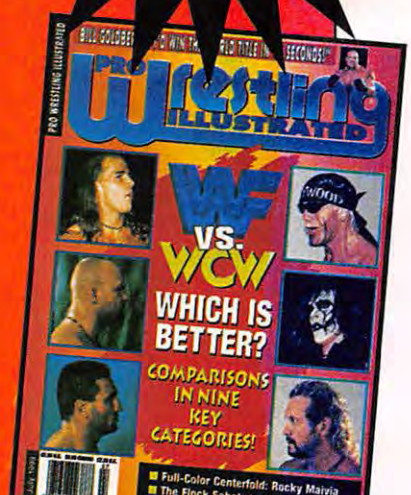

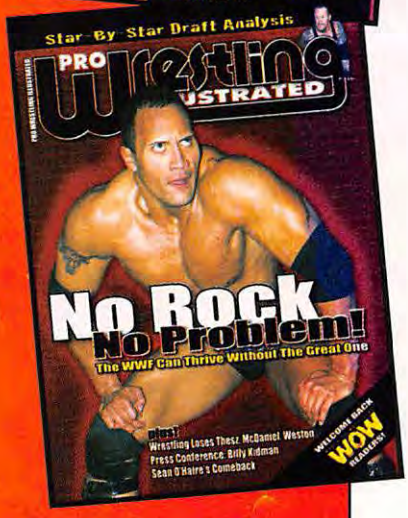

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July 1990: The Maturing Of Lex Luger: The "Total Package" Becomes The People's Choice. Centerfold: Rick Martel. Plus: Skyscrapers, Bobby Heenan, Mr. Saito, referees.

September 1990: The Hulkster's Wrath: 7,000 Miles To Violent Redemption. Centerfold: The Steiners. Plus: Jeff Jarrett, Sting, Destruction Crew, Four Horsemen, Curt Hennig.

April 1991: Sgt. Slaughter Guilty Of Treason! Centerfold: Tom Zenk. Plus: Sting, Magnum T.A., Jesse Ventura, Lawler-Gilbert, Hogan & Warrior.

June 1991: Hulk Hogan: America's Hero. Centerfold: Hacksaw Duggan. Plus: Cactus Jack, Ric Flair, Nasty Boys, Steiners, Simmons-Reed.

August 1991 (Special Issue): Supercards '91. Centerfold: Hulk Hogan. Plus: WrestleMania VII, WCW-New Japan, Ultimate Warrior, Owen Hart, Koloff-Luger.

October 1991: Sid Justice: The Second Coming Of Hulk Hogan. Centerfold: Lex Luger. Plus: Hogan-Slaughter, Terrence Taylor, Barry Windham, Williams-Bigelow.

February 1992: Has Hulk Hogan Had Enough? Centerfold: 1992 calendar. Plus: Sting, Justice-Roberts, hot prospects, Eddie Gilbert.

May 1992: Revitalized In Tokyo: Hulk Hogan Is Super-Psyched For WrestleMania VII! Centerfold: Rick Rude. Plus: Sting & Muta-Steiners, Jarrett & Fuller, Lightning Kid, Randy Savage, intimidation.

June 1992: Exclusive *PWI* Interview: Roddy Piper Speaks Out! Centerfold: Dustin Rhodes. Plus: Dangerously-Sting, Abdullah-Cactus, Sid Justice, Randy Savage.

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May 1998: Starrcade Scandal! We Hate To Say It ... But Give The Belt Back To Hogan. Centerfold: Ric Flair. Plus: Mero & Sable, Taz, Taka Michinoku.

June 1998 (Special Issue): The 1998 *PWI* Poll. Centerfold: Steve Austin. Plus: Sabu, Lex Luger, Sting, Rocky Maivia, Bill Goldberg.

July 1998: WWF vs. WCW: Which Is Better? Centerfold: Rocky Maivia. Plus: Benoit, Bill Goldberg, Ahmed Johnson.

October 1998: Bret Screws Bret, Part II. Centerfold: Hunter Hearst Helmsley. Plus: Jim Ross, Marcus Bagwell, WWF controversy, FBI.

Holiday 1998: *PWI* 500. Eighth Annual Special.

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April 1999: The Crock! The Title Change That Screwed The World! Centerfold: Chris Jericho. Plus: Bill Goldberg, Tommy Dreamer, Booker T, more Unofficial/Officials.

May 1999: Who Holds The Key To WrestleMania XV? Centerfold: Konnan. Plus: Mark Henry, Sting-Nash, Bill Alfonso, Brian Hildebrand.

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September 1999: Why Stone-Cold Might Get Out While He's Still On Top! Centerfold: Sting. Plus: Kidman & Misterio, The Rock, Bret Hart, Taz-Sabu.

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☐ APR 91	☐ SEP 99	☐ JUN 01	☐ MAY 03
☐ JUN 91	☐ OCT 99	☐ JUL 01	☐ JUN 03
☐ AUG 91	☐ NOV 99	☐ AUG 01	☐ AUG 03
☐ OCT 91	☐ DEC 99	☐ SEP 01	☐ SEP 03
☐ FEB 92	☐ HOL 99	☐ OCT 01	☐ OCT 03
☐ MAY 92	☐ JAN 00	☐ NOV 01	☐ DEC 03
☐ JUN 92	☐ FEB 00	☐ DEC 01	☐ JAN 04
☐ JUL 92	☐ MAR 00	☐ JAN 02	☐ FEB 04
☐ SEP 92	☐ APR 00	☐ FEB 02	☐ APR 04
☐ FEB 93	☐ MAY 00	☐ MAR 02	☐ MAY 04
☐ MAY 96	☐ JUN 00	☐ APR 02	☐ JUN 04
☐ OCT 96	☐ JUL 00	☐ MAY 02	☐ AUG 04
☐ MAY 98	☐ AUG 00	☐ JUN 02	☐ OCT 04
☐ JUN 98	☐ SEP 00	☐ JUL 02	☐ DEC 04
☐ JUL 98	☐ OCT 00	☐ AUG 02	☐ FEB 05
☐ OCT 98	☐ NOV 00	☐ SEP 02	☐ MAR 05
☐ HOL 98	☐ DEC 00	☐ OCT 02	☐ APR 05
☐ MAR 99	☐ HOL 00	☐ NOV 02	
☐ APR 99	☐ JAN 01	☐ DEC 02	
☐ MAY 99	☐ FEB 01	☐ JAN 03	

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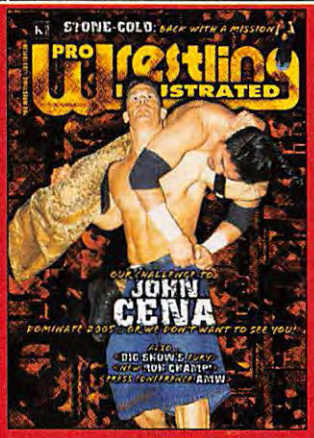
between falls

PRO WRESTLING ILLUSTRATED welcomes readers' comments on any of our stories or columns. Send letters to: BETWEEN FALLS Box 1148, Ft. Washington, PA 19034
Or you can e-mail your comments to prowrestlingillustrated@yahoo.com
Letters preceded by a ☎ indicate letters left by fans on the *PWI* Hotline (1-900-226-4PWI; see ad elsewhere in this issue).

THAT'S A GOOD START



We took John Cena to task in our cover story in the June 2005 issue ("Our Challenge To John Cena: Dominate 2005 ... Or We Don't Want to See You!") "The Doctor Of Thuganomics" wasted no time dominating JBL to win the Smackdown title at WrestleMania 21. But Cena still must prove he can handle the pressure of being champion.

Our tough talk prompted many fans to take a stand.

"I agree with your assessment of Cena," wrote Kara Reiser of Chicopee, Massachusetts. "He talks a lot of smack for a guy who isn't exactly among the all-time greats yet."

"You did a good job exercising restraint," e-mailed Jim Burton of Montgomery, Alabama. "It can be tempting to label every up-and-coming star 'the next big thing.' Wisely, *PWI* has told Cena to put up or shut up."

Of course, there are those who feel otherwise.

"You guys must feel foolish," wrote Danny Berkes of Rome, New York. "The ink had barely dried on your attempt to blast Cena and he wins the title. Now you'll probably take credit for 'inspiring' him!"

OVW INVASION!

Want to know what WWE will look like in 2007? Take a look at Ohio Valley Wrestling and you should get a pretty good idea.

Over the past few weeks, there has been an incredible invasion of OVW talent into WWE. Since WrestleMania, Matt Morgan, The Heartthrobs, and M-N-M have all joined the roster. And don't forget that Batista and John Cena are both former OVW heavyweight champions as well.

It's exciting to see that WWE has so many exciting young prospects in its developmental territory. Once the long-discussed Atlanta territory is up and running, even more independent talent will have an opportunity to get their big break in WWE. And when more hot new talent gets into WWE, it can only make things that much more interesting.

It's incredible to think that the next big WWE superstar is very possibly competing in front of a couple hundred fans down in Kentucky or Georgia today. These are exciting days in wrestling, so long as you know where to look.

RODNEY RASKIN
House Springs, MO

Just three years ago, Batista was one of the top stars of OVW, as Leviathan. Look at him now. Reader Rodney Raskin is happy to see more OVW stars promoted to WWE and likes that WWE is expanding its developmental system.

INSTANT CLASSIC

The WrestleMania 21 match between Shawn Michaels and Kurt Angle reminded me of why I became a fan of this sport almost 20 years ago.

Angle-Michaels was a mat classic that I think will be remembered alongside Flair-Steamboat, Steamboat-Savage, and Michaels-Hart as some of the epic matches of our time. It's hard to believe both Michaels and Angle had previously suffered career-threatening injuries (Michaels' back and Angle's neck). Both men wrestled without any signs of fear or trepidation, and they put on the most compelling match I've seen in years.

After living through the Monday night wars, the ECW era, Ring of Honor and the indy explosion, and checking out a handful of Japanese tapes, I thought I'd seen it all. I never thought a match could again captivate me the way Michaels-Angle did. But for the better part of 30 minutes, "The Heartbreak Kid" and the Olympic gold medallist made me sit on the edge of my

seat and fall in love with wrestling all over again.

SCOTT BRADT
Rochester, MN

BIG FAN OF THE BIG MEN

I may be in the minority—okay, the *distinct* minority—but I actually enjoyed the Big Show-Akebono sumo match at WrestleMania 21. I'm no sumo expert, but I do stop to watch it when I come across sumo on ESPN2 while channel-surfing in those early morning hours.

Even with my casual interest, it was obvious that this wasn't a traditional sumo match. I've never seen two sumo wrestlers trade football shoulderblocks like Show and Akebono did, for instance. And your average sumo match usually lasts about 15 seconds, not a couple of minutes like Show vs. Akebono.

Still, WWE tried to present its version of a foreign sport that is steeped in tradition. I think it treated the art of sumo, and Akebono, the first U.S.-born *yokozuna* (grand champion) with uncharacteristic respect. Thumbs up to WWE for trying something new, and thumbs up for not insulting sumo by playing the whole thing for laughs.

JOE RITCHIE
Henrietta, NY

ALL ABOUT BENJAMIN

Shelton Benjamin is very quietly staking his claim as one of the greatest Intercontinental champions in WWE history.

As of this writing, Benjamin has held the I-C title for six-plus months. Benjamin's reign could end up surpassing Randy Orton's record as the longest I-C title reign since The Rock's 1998 run. Remember how everyone was buzzing about Orton's run? Why is it that Benjamin isn't getting the same respect?

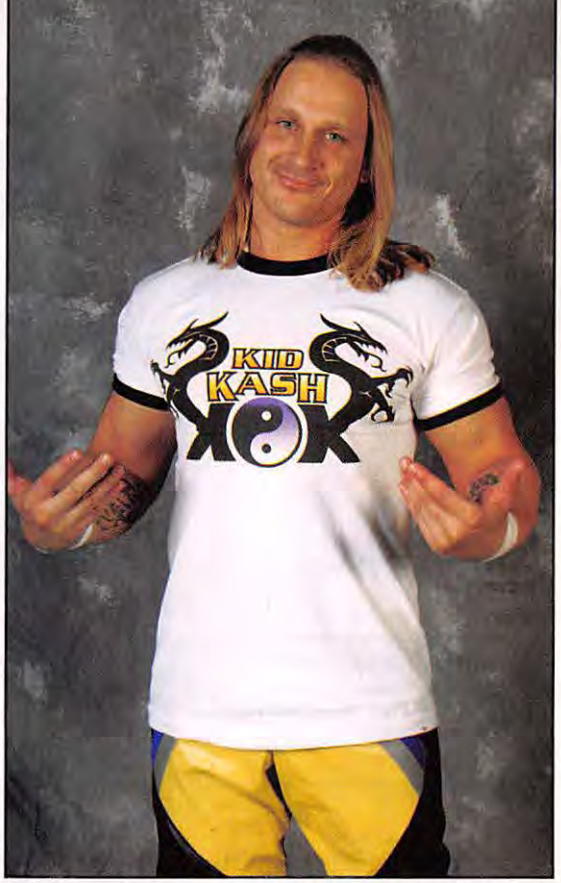
Maybe Benjamin isn't getting the same respect because his only PPV title defense of 2005 (through April) was a squash against Maven (since he competed in the Royal Rumble match and the "Money In The Bank" ladder match at WrestleMania). Maybe he'll start getting respect soon.

Look at the facts: Benjamin was the highlight, if not the winner, of the six-man ladder match at WrestleMania. He is a two-time Smackdown tag team champion. He may well be the best all-around athlete in WWE today, and he's had one of the longest Intercontinental title reigns of the past decade. Before all is said and done, Benjamin will be a world champion. And I think he will be a much bigger star than Orton, Batista, or John Cena.

CHRISTOPHER GODZUK
Sacramento, CA

KID MISTAKE

I hear that Kid Kash requested his release from TNA so he could try to finagle himself a spot on WWE's ECW: One Night Only pay-per-view. What a bonehead move!



Kid Kash made a gigantic mistake by all but forcing TNA to release him, according to Wendy Williams. She doesn't expect WWE to sign him.

TNA is getting better each and every month. A.J. Styles is back in position to take the NWA title from Jeff Jarrett. Christopher Daniels is reigniting the X division. And it looks like a feud between 2004's Tag Team of the Year, America's Most Wanted, and The Hardy Boyz might be right around the corner.

What are we going to get from the WWE-produced ECW event? A bunch of the dregs WWE was never interested in signing five years ago, that's what. If I want to watch Tony Mamaluke wrestle Angel, I'll go to my local armory and wait for the next fly-by-night independent card to come by.

Kash must think he's going to impress WWE management and someone is going to hand him that magical WWE contract. Yeah, good plan. Wouldn't it make more sense to be a part of TNA's incredible X division and get attention by wrestling Daniels, Styles, Elix Skipper, and the rest of the phenomenal X division talent? Enjoy your four-minute loss to The Sandman, Kash.

WENDY WILLIAMS
Jupiter, FL □

PWI Hotline Extra!

Your answers to our question of the week!

Question of the Week: Which WWE release do you feel was more justified, Molly Holly or Matt Hardy? (April 17 to April 23, 2005)

Hotline callers respond: "I hate to see both of them go, but I guess since Molly requested her release, it's a little bit easier saying goodbye considering this is the career path she has set," said Josh Scott of Wilmington, Delaware.

"Matt Hardy should have known better than to start flapping his lips about his personal problems on the Internet. He had his release coming," said William Hayes of Cheektowaga, New York.

"WWE had no business getting rid of Hardy, and it made a huge mistake by misusing Molly to the extent where she felt she had to leave," said Steve Rosario of Glen Burnie, Maryland. "Neither was justified, and WWE is at fault. I bet they'll regret letting both of them get away."

PWI official ratings

For period ended May 13, 2005

TOP 10

1. **BATISTA**
   318, Washington, DC
   (1) WWE Raw champion
2. **JOHN CENA**
   260, West Newbury, MA
   (3) WWE Smackdown champion
3. **SATOSHI KOJIMA**
   223, Tokyo, Japan
   (2) All-Japan Triple Crown/IWGP champion
4. **JOHN B. LAYFIELD**
   306, Roscoe, TX
   (5) No. 1 contender: WWE Smackdown title
5. **EDGE**
   240, Toronto, Ontario
   (9) No. 1 contender: WWE Raw title
6. **TAKESHI RIKIOH**
   286, Sakurai, Japan
   (6) GHC heavyweight champion
7. **JEFF JARRETT**
   230, Nashville, TN
   (8) NWA heavyweight champion
8. **BOOKER T**
   250, Houston, TX
   (-) No. 2 contender: WWE Smackdown title
9. **SHELTON BENJAMIN**
   245, Spartanburg, SC
   (10) WWE Intercontinental champion
10. **TRIPLE-H**
    269, Greenwich, CT
    (4) No. 3 contender: WWE Raw title

Batista

TAG TEAMS

1. **JOEY MERCURY & JOHNNY NITRO**
   Combined weight: 417 pounds
   (-) WWE Smackdown tag team champions
2. **SHINSUKE NAKAMURA & HIROSHI TANAHASHI**
   Combined weight: 477 pounds
   (2) IWGP International tag team champions
3. **THE HURRICANE & ROSEY**
   Combined weight: 570 pounds
   (-) WWE Raw tag team champions
4. **JAMAL & TAIYO KEA**
   Combined weight: 591 pounds
   (7) All-Japan International tag team champions
5. **ANDY DOUGLAS & CHASE STEVENS**
   Combined weight: 444 pounds
   (10) NWA tag team champions
6. **CHRIS HARRIS & JAMES STORM**
   Combined weight: 516 pounds
   (4) No. 1 contenders: NWA tag title
7. **WILLIAM REGAL & TAJIRI**
   Combined weight: 461 pounds
   (3) No. 1 contenders: WWE Raw tag title
8. **THE BASHAM BROTHERS**
   Combined weight: 492 pounds
   (6) No. 1 contenders: WWE Smackdown tag title
9. **SCORPIO & DOUG WILLIAMS**
   Combined weight: 464 pounds
   (5) GHC tag team champions
10. **ROBERT CONWAY & SYLVAN GRENIER**
    Combined weight: 475 pounds
    (8) No. 2 contenders: WWE Raw tag title

WWE RAW

Raw Champion:
BATISTA
(C) 318, Washington, DC

1—**EDGE**
(2) 240, Toronto, Ontario
2—**SHELTON BENJAMIN**
(3) 245, Spartanburg, SC
3—**TRIPLE-H**
(1) 269, Greenwich, CT
4—**SHAWN MICHAELS**
(5) 217, San Antonio, TX
5—**KANE**
(6) 326, St. Louis, MO
6—**MUHAMMAD HASSAN**
(8) 231, Syracuse, NY
7—**CHRIS BENOIT**
(4) 224, Edmonton, Alberta
8—**CHRISTIAN**
(9) 225, Toronto, Ontario
9—**CHRIS JERICHO**
(7) 225, Winnipeg, Manitoba
10—**VISCERA**
(-) 496, Memphis, TN

WWE SMACKDOWN

Smackdown Champion:
JOHN CENA
(C) 260, West Newbury, MA

1—**JOHN B. LAYFIELD**
(1) 306, Roscoe, TX
2—**BOOKER T**
(8) 250, Houston, TX
3—**KURT ANGLE**
(2) 233, Pittsburgh, PA
4—**THE BIG SHOW**
(6) 485, Aiken, SC
5—**REY MISTERIO JR.**
(4) 163, San Diego, CA
6—**EDDIE GUERRERO**
(7) 223, El Paso, TX
7—**PAUL LONDON**
(9) 201, Austin, TX
8—**ORLANDO JORDAN**
(5) 250, Miami, FL
9—**HEIDENREICH**
(-) 275, New Orleans, LA
10—**CARLITO CARIBBEAN COOL**
(-) 220, San Juan, Puerto Rico

OVW

OVW Champion:
BRENT ALBRIGHT
(1) 230, Tulsa, OK

1—**ELIJAH BURKE**
(C) 230, Jacksonville, FL
2—**MATT MORGAN**
(4) 330, Fairfield, CT
3—**AARON STEVENS**
(2) 237, Boston, MA
4—**MATT CAPPOTELLI**
(-) 220, Norwich, NY
5—**DANNY INFERNO**
(8) 237, Atlantic City, NJ
6—**MIKE MONDO**
(5) 185, Long Island City, NY
7—**SETH SKYFIRE**
(6) 224, Louisville, KY
8—**TANK TOLAND**
(3) 220, Margate, NJ
9—**GANGREL**
(-) 256, Tampa, FL
10—**CHAD TOLAND**
(-) 228, Boston, MA

RING OF HONOR

ROH Champion:
AUSTIN ARIES
(C) 202, Milwaukee, WI

1—**SAMOA JOE**
(9) 270, American Samoa
2—**C.M. PUNK**
(8) 220, Chicago, IL
3—**HOMICIDE**
(2) 220, Brooklyn, NY
4—**JAMES GIBSON**
(3) 190, Hanover, WV
5—**LOW-KI**
(-) 170, Brooklyn, NY
6—**NIGEL McGUINNESS**
(-) 220, London, England
7—**COLT CABANA**
(10) 235, Chicago, IL
8—**JIMMY RAVE**
(7) 177, Atlanta, GA
9—**JAY LETHAL**
(1) 192, Elizabeth, NJ
10—**ALEX SHELLEY**
(5) 199, Detroit, MI

Top 10 and Tag Team ratings are based on won-lost records for the past month, quality of opposition, and inherent skill of each wrestler or team. These ratings are compiled by the magazine's editorial board. All other ratings are based on the official current positions of challengers to the top title in each category; certain titleholders receive an automatic spot in the ratings. The number in parentheses indicates a wrestler's position in that category last issue; (-) indicates that the wrestler was not rated in that category last issue. while (C) indicates the wrestler was champion in that category last issue.

AWA SUPREME CHAMPIONSHIP WRESTLING: Champion—The Prophet; **1**—Billy Maverick; **2**—Nick Noble; **3**—Eric Draven; **4**—Roger Blade; **5**—Kliff Hanger; **6**—Vito Andretti; **7**—Jack Black; **8**—William Valentine; **9**—Bob Coots; **10**—Spazz.

CENTRAL WRESTLING ALLIANCE: Champion—Tommy Green; **1**—Terry Alan; **2**—Barry D; **3**—Maddawg; **4**—Redneck Superstar; **5**—Tony Corral; **6**—Super Nova; **7**—Syxe; **8**—Jimmy Lamb; **9**—Diamond; **10**—King Paul.

CHAMPIONSHIP INTERNATIONAL WRESTLING: Champion—Milwaukee Mauler; **1**—Doink; **2**—NWO Sting; **3**—The Bounty Hunter; **4**—Kurt Kaoss; **5**—Elvis Elliott; **6**—Chainsaw; **7**—Nitro; **8**—Mr. Hughes; **9**—Jaysen Yang; **10**—Tommy Titus.

CHAMPIONSHIP WRESTLING: Champion—Tom Prichard; **1**—Thornn; **2**—Alyx Winters; **3**—Danny Ray; **4**—Clay Connors; **5**—Beau James; **6**—Tony Givens; **7**—Josh Cody; **8**—Robbie Cassidy; **9**—Wayne Adkins; **10**—Nick Hammonds.

EAST COAST WRESTLING ASSOCIATION: Champion—Scotty Charisma; **1**—Chase Del Monte; **2**—Mike Kruel; **3**—Andrew Ryker; **4**—Cheetah Master; **5**—Freak Nastty; **6**—Mega; **7**—Mr. Ooh La La; **8**—Shawn Patrick; **9**—Aden Chambers; **10**—Japanese Pool Boy.

FULL IMPACT PRO: Champion—Homicide; **1**—C.M. Punk; **2**—James Gibson; **3**—Spanky; **4**—Roderick Strong; **5**—Steve Madison; **6**—Jerrelle Clark; **7**—Antonio Banks; **8**—Vordell Walker; **9**—Jimmy Rave; **10**—Sal Rinauro.

IWA FLASHFIRE: Champion—Tower; **1**—Don Matthews; **2**—Buford T; **3**—Rahn Jordan; **4**—Casey J; **5**—Logan; **6**—Boulevard; **7**—Solitude; **8**—Phillip Pain; **9**—Lance Christopher; **10**—Tommy Sawyer.

NATIONAL INDEPENDENT CHAMPIONSHIP WRESTLING: Champion—Ken Steel; **1**—Wyld Chyld; **2**—Chris Dramin; **3**—Buffalo Frits; **4**—Dustin Daniels; **5**—Mike Slaughter; **6**—Larry Moravec; **7**—KnightStalker; **8**—Tone Up; **9**—Kasper; **10**—Chris Collins.

NORTHEAST WRESTLING: Champion—Title Vacant; **1**—Jerry Lawler; **2**—King Kong Bundy; **3**—Dusty Rhodes; **4**—Mikey Batts; **5**—Xavier; **6**—Jay Lethal; **7**—Jeff Starr; **8**—Rob Eckos; **9**—Julio Dinero; **10**—Kamala.

NWA FLORIDA: Champion—Bruce Steele; **1**—Erick Stevens; **2**—Steve Madison; **3**—Roderick Strong; **4**—James Hendrix; **5**—Rod Steel; **6**—Vordell Walker; **7**—Marcus Dillon; **8**—Tommy Vandal; **9**—Frankie Capone; **10**—Kahagus.

NWA VIRGINIA: Champion—Damian Wayne; **1**—Mike Booth; **2**—Scotty Blaze; **3**—Chris Dramin; **4**—Billy Gibbs; **5**—Brandon Day; **6**—Frank Parker; **7**—Preston Quinn; **8**—Mike Vaughn; **9**—Beef; **10**—Pharoah.

PRO WRESTLING ENTERTAINMENT: Champion—Glen Osbourne; **1**—King Kong Bundy; **2**—The Patriot; **3**—Aidiean; **4**—Mike Quackenbush; **5**—Larry Sweeney; **6**—Hallowicked; **7**—Johnny Graham; **8**—Flex Fenom; **9**—Gran Akuma; **10**—Kage.

NWA

NWA Champion:
JEFF JARRETT
(C) 230, Nashville, TN

1—A.J. STYLES
(9) 202, Gainesville, GA
2—CHRISTOPHER DANIELS
(-) 210, Los Angeles, CA
3—ABYSS
(-) 295, Cincinnati, OH
4—JEFF HARDY
(-) 212, Cameron, NC
5—SPYDER
(3) 225, New York, NY
6—J.T. WOLFEN
(-) 297, New Haven, CT
7—RAVEN
(-) 243, Short Hills, NJ
8—KEVIN NASH
(-) 290, Detroit, MI
9—VID VAIN
(5) 257, Bishops Falls, NF
10—JASON RUMBLE
(-) 201, Boston, MA

TNA

NWA Champion:
JEFF JARRETT
(C) 230, Nashville, TN

1—CHRISTOPHER DANIELS
(1) 210, Los Angeles, CA
2—A.J. STYLES
(3) 202, Gainesville, GA
3—JEFF HARDY
(5) 212, Cameron, NC
4—SHOCKER
(-) 185, Guadalajara, Mexico
5—ABYSS
(7) 295, Cincinnati, OH
6—RAVEN
(-) 243, Short Hills, NJ
7—ELIX SKIPPER
(6) 221, Atlanta, GA
8—THE OUTLAW
(9) 262, Austin, TX
9—CHRIS SABIN
(-) 207, Hell, MI
10—KONNAN
(-) 235, Mexico City, Mexico

JAPAN

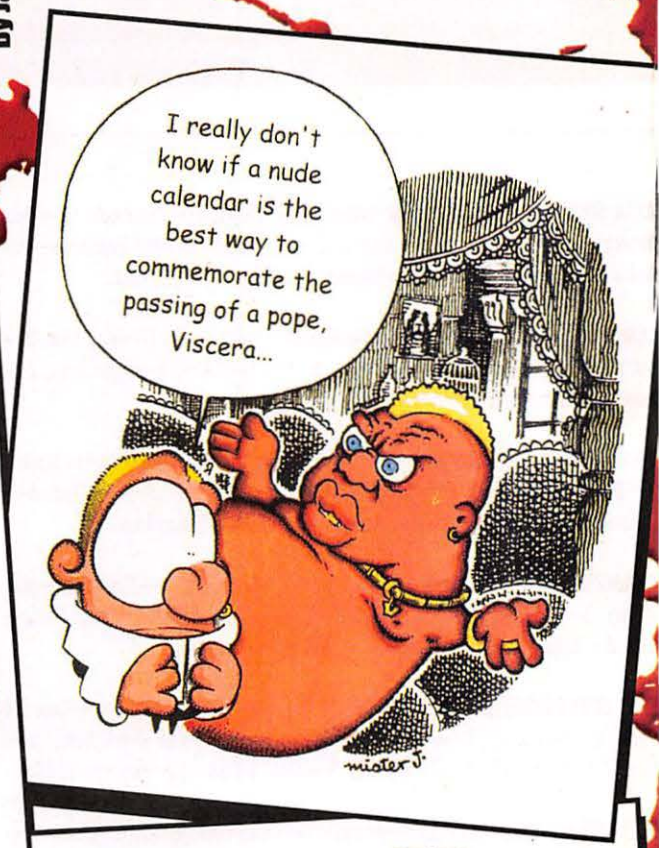
1—SATOSHI KOJIMA
(1) 223, Tokyo, Japan
All-Japan Triple Crown champion
IWGP heavyweight champion
2—TAKESHI RIKIOH
(2) 286, Sakurai, Japan
GHC heavyweight champion
3—TOSHIAKI KAWADA
(4) 245, Ashikaga, Japan
4—HIROYOSHI TENZAN
(10) 270, Tokyo, Japan
5—TIGER MASK IV
(6) 170, Uruyasu, Japan
6—TAKA MICHINOKU
(9) 169, Morioka, Japan
7—KENSUKE SASAKI
(8) 251, Tokyo, Japan
8—KENTA KOBASHI
(3) 282, Fukuchiyama, Japan
9—KEIJI MUTO
(5) 245, Yamanashi, Japan
10—JUSHIN LIGER
(-) 222, Hiroshima, Japan

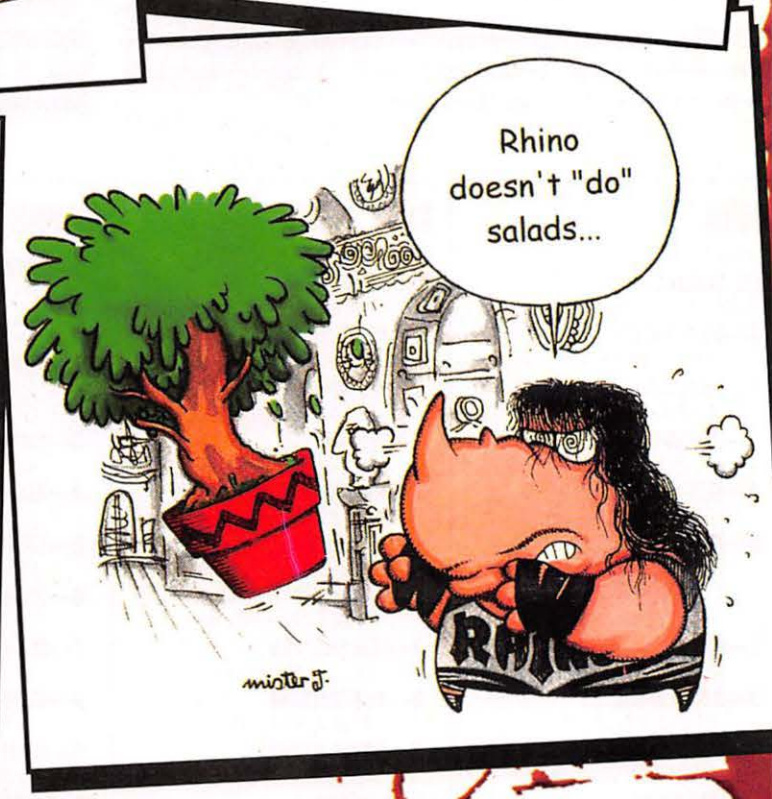
MEXICO

1—EL HIJO DEL SANTO
(4) 180, Tulancingo, Mexico
2—L.A. PARK
(1) 235, Torreon, Mexico
3—PERRO AGUAYO JR.
(6) 165, Zacatecas, Mexico
4—KONNAN
(7) 235, Mexico City, Mexico
5—LATIN LOVER
(-) 190, Monterrey, Mexico
6—VAMPIRO
(-) 220, Thunder Bay, Ontario
7—HEAVY METAL
(8) 180, Mexico City, Mexico
8—HECTOR GARZA
(-) 220, Monterrey, Mexico
9—OCTAGON
(-) 180, Monterrey, Mexico
10—NEGRO CASAS
(-) 175, Mexico City, Mexico

Drawing Blood

By Jason Conlan





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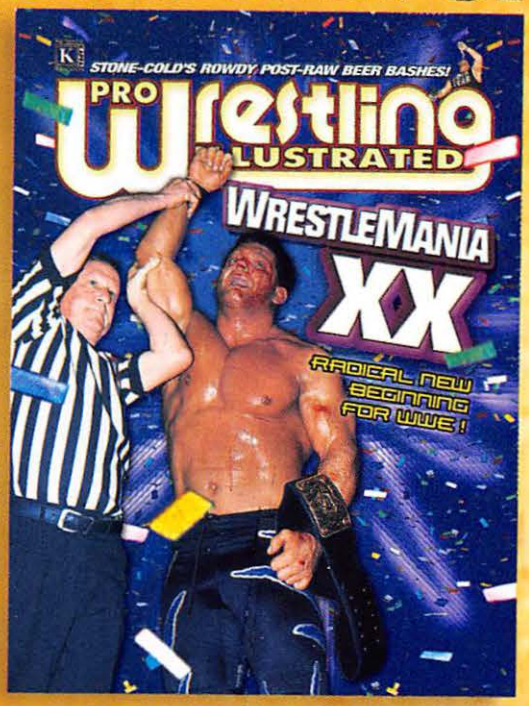

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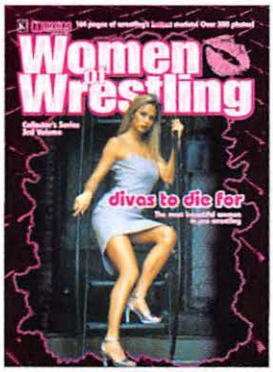

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HOTLINE

Hosted by Dan Murphy

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